

A Recovery Reader

**Studies in AA, the Steps and
the Process of the Program**

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*Portions of this book have been reprinted in Sponsor Magazine.
sponsormagazine.org*

WARNING: Travel beyond this point without a Sponsor is not advised.

Intent of This Book

This book is intended to be used:

- a) to serve as a personal enrichment course-in-a-book on Recovery and AA History.
- b) for a Sponsor who shares this information with someone they are attempting to help.
- c) to create a new class as appropriate to your area's needs and opportunity by taking the suggestions and materials to assemble or revise as you see fit.

It is not presented as the “only” way to do the work of sharing the Program, but is synthesis of work by over thirty authors over the past half century plus of effective AA recovery.

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Drunks: A Poem

We died of pneumonia in furnished rooms
where they found us three days later
when somebody complained about the smell
we died against bridge abutments
and nobody knew if it was suicide
and we probably didn't know ourselves
except in the sense that it was always suicide
we died in hospitals
our stomachs huge, distended
and there was nothing they could do
we died in cells
never knowing whether we were guilty or not.

We went to priests
they gave us pledges
they told us to pray
they told us to go and sin no more,
but go
we tried and we died

we died of overdoses
we died in bed
(but usually not the Big Bed)
we died in straitjackets
in the DTs seeing God knows what
creeping skittering slithering
shuffling things

And you know what the worst thing was?
The worst thing was that nobody ever believed
how hard we tried

We went to doctors and they gave us stuff to take
that would make us sick when we drank
on the principle of so crazy, it just might work, I guess
or they sent us places like Dropkick Murphy's

and when we got out we were hooked on paraldehyde
or maybe we lied to the doctors
and they told us don't drink so much
just drink like me
and we tried
and we died

we drowned in our own vomit
or choked on it
our broken jaws wired shut
we died playing Russian roulette
and everybody thought we'd lost
we died under the hooves of horses
under the wheels of vehicles
under the knives and bootheels of our brother drunks
we died in shame

And you know what was even worse?
was that we couldn't believe it ourselves
that we had tried
and we died believing that didn't know
what it *meant* to try

When we were desperate or hopeful or
deluded or embattled enough to ask for help
we went to people with letters after their names
and prayed that they might have read the right books
that had the right words in them
never suspecting the terrifying truth
that the right words, as simple as they were
had not been written yet

We died falling off girders on high buildings
because of course ironworkers drink
of course they do
we died with a shotgun in our mouth
or jumping off a bridge
and everybody knew it *was* suicide
we died under the Southeast Expressway
with our hands tied behind us
and a bullet in the back of our head
because this time the people that we disappointed
were the *wrong* people
we died in convulsions, or of "insult to the brain"
incontinent, and in disgrace, abandoned
if we were women, we died degraded,
because women have so much more to live up to

we tried and we died and nobody cried

And the very worst thing
was that for every one of us who died
there were another hundred of us, or another thousand
who wished that we *would* die
who went to sleep praying we would not have to wake up
because what we were enduring was intolerable
and we knew in our hearts
it wasn't ever gonna change

One day in a hospital room in New York City
one of us had what the books call
a "transforming spiritual experience"
and he said to himself

I've got it
(*no you haven't you've only got part of it*)

and I have to share it
(*now you've ALMOST got it*)

and he tried to give it away
but we couldn't hear it
the transmission line wasn't open yet
we tried to hear it
we tried and we died

we died of one last cigarette
the comfort of its glowing in the dark
we passed out and the bed caught fire
they said we suffocated before our body burned
they said we never felt a thing
that was the *best* way maybe that we died
except sometimes we took our family with us

And the man in New York was so sure he had it
he tried to love us into sobriety
but that didn't work either,
love confuses drunks
still he tried and still we died
one after another we got his hopes up
and we broke his heart, because
that's what we do

And the very worst thing of all the worst things
was that every time we thought we knew

what the worst thing was,
something happened that was even worse

Until a day came in a hotel lobby
and it wasn't in Rome, or Jerusalem, or Mecca
or even Dublin, or South Boston
it was in Akron, Ohio, for Christ's sake

a day came when the man said
I have to find a drunk
because I need him as much as he needs me
(NOW
you've got it)

and the transmission line
after all those years
was open
the transmission line was open

And now we don't go to priests
and we don't go to doctors
and people with letters after their names
we come to people who have been there
we come to each other
and we try
and we don't have to die

—Jack McC

Where to Start

Everyone has to start where they are. Our charge is to “carry this message.”

Too often, the person carrying the message does not realize they are carrying their own prejudices... “If they don’t have a sponsor, they aren’t serious...”, “If the God Talk runs them out, alcohol and drugs will run them back in...” or “Don’t you KNOW ...”

The newcomer is a blank slate. Far fewer people hear about Alcoholics Anonymous than we would like to think.

This book approaches the idea of “carrying the message” from the viewpoint of the Newcomer. The new Newcomer. The one who has never heard the message - or has never paid attention to it.

We lay a simple set of spiritual tools at their feet. This book is designed to provide teaching skills that will help you carry this message. To lay it at their feet. To quiet their fears so they can take the Steps to find their future and freedom from their past.

Carry this message.

What Is Expected

You found your way to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Congratulations

You may be here for the first time, or you may be returning. Either way, you never have to pick up a drink again.

What Is Expected

Go to meetings. Meetings are where you will make contact with the fellowship, find out what we mean by Big Book and other references, get phone numbers, and discover how you fit into the AA fellowship.

Don't Drink Between Meetings

Do NOT pick up a drink between meetings. If you do not take a drink, you cannot get drunk. If you think you might drink put it off for 15 minutes, then another 15 minutes, and so on until you can get to a meeting. Use the phone to call someone before you take a drink - after you take a drink there is nothing they can do to help.

Get a Big Book

The Big Book is the book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Copies are available for sale in almost every meeting. You can get copies in used bookstores, or even the public library. We recommend you become familiar with the first 181 pages (164 basic pages plus Dr. Bob's story at the beginning of personal stories).

Go to Several Big Book Study Meetings

Big Book Studies will read a portion of the book as a group and discuss its meaning. The Program is found in the Big Book and these study meetings will help you far more than reading the book by yourself.

Get a Home Group

When you have been to some meetings, it is suggested that you find a Home Group. That is a group you attend regularly and get to know people (and be known).

Get phone numbers. Some people will offer you their phone numbers - use them. There is nothing magic about having a list of numbers in your pocket. Calling someone to ask what meetings they would recommend, when they said something that specifically addresses a problem you are having, or before you take a drink. Use phone numbers.

Get a Sponsor

A sponsor is someone who is ahead of you in the Program who can get to know your story, share their story, and show you how to work the Steps.

Do Service

The meetings exist because people volunteer to set up the tables, make coffee, set out the literature, greet people at the door, or clean up after the meeting. This kind of service can help

you feel a part of the meeting and gives you the opportunity to talk with people casually.

There is an unofficial suggestion of 90 meetings in 90 days. Part of the reason is the commitment gives you a real chance to understand what we

offer, the different types of meetings, and enough time detoxifying your body to be able to have a clear enough mind to answer the question: "Am I an Alcoholic?"

Tools of the Program

We of AA have many tools to help us.

Fellowship

The company of others who share our path to Recovery. The Fellowship is expressed in MEETINGS; through LITERATURE; through SPONSORSHIP; using the PHONE between meetings; through the STEPS; and through the sharing of experience, strength, and hope outside the meetings.

Meetings

Regular meetings of AA are held by Groups. The Group may host one meeting per week or many. Guides are available with a list of local days, times, and locations of meetings in the local area. Attend several different meetings and several different types (Open, Discussion, Speaker, Book Study, etc.) to find the one you want to make your Home Group, and then attend the meeting(s) for that Group regularly.

Groups

This is one group of recovering alcoholics who gather one or more times each week to share their experience, strength, and hope. Joining a Home Group helps end our alcoholic isolation and helps build the foundation for the work ahead.

The Phone

We use the telephone as our “meeting between meetings.” Regular contact with other people is a lifeline when new situations require us to deal differently with life on life’s terms. We call our Sponsors and call other people we have met in the meetings. We encourage you to collect and use phone numbers.

Service

We do Service to share our experience, strength, and hope; to make our meetings possible; to see how our experience can benefit others; and to give back to the Fellowship for what was given to us so freely. We become trusted servants - we do not govern.

Literature

The Big Book is the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. The “12 & 12” is the book THE TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS.

These two books give the specific steps of our Program, which we have found necessary to find and maintain our sobriety. They are available at our cost and the pamphlets are free.

Sponsor

A Sponsor is a person with substantial sobriety who is willing to share their experience, strength, and hope with you - to help you apply the 12 Steps

to your life. Sponsors are not therapists, counselors, bankers, or authorities.

We are all alcoholics working Recovery One Day at a Time. Find someone who has Recovery as you want it and ask them what they did to get it.

A Temporary Sponsor

is someone willing to answer your first questions, even though they may only be a little way ahead of you on the path of Recovery. A Temporary Sponsor will help you for the first month or two while you look for your Sponsor.

Steps

The Twelve Steps are the process to deal with life without the crutch of alcohol and drugs. The Steps are written in an order and must be worked in that order to get the effect. We work the Steps with a Sponsor and with the support of other members of the program who are ahead of us in the process - and we help those who come after us with what we have actually done.

The authority of AA comes from Page 20 of the Big Book - "We will tell you what we have done." Not theory or ideas or opinions we have heard, but actually done.

AA, Steps and Program

What They Are and What They Are Not

AA (the affectionate nickname for the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous) is something different. If you think you know what it is, it will disappoint you and you will go away looking for what you expected to find. You will miss what it is and, if you are an alcoholic of our type and moving along that doomed path, what it is may save your life.

People come to AA and try to tell themselves they already know what it is. When AA turns out to be something other than what they expected before they arrived, they miss the message and the hope, and go away disappointed.

They think AA is a church. It isn't. AA is a lousy church. We say that you have to have a power greater than yourself, which most of us call God, but we do not tell you what to believe. If you want church, go to church. That's where they do "church" right.

They think AA is therapy. AA is lousy therapy. If you want therapy, go to therapy. That's where they do therapy. Many of us have used therapy as part of their program, but AA is not therapy.

They think AA is social services. Some AAs have been known to share cigarettes, rides, or allow a newcomer to sleep on the couch, but AA is lousy social services. Go to social services for that - they do it better.

The Preamble

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

The Big Book

The Big Book is the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," first published in 1939, written primarily by Bill Wilson and edited through discussion between the two AA groups (approximately 100 alcoholics) with additional input from family and various professionals. The purpose of the book was to carry the system of 12-Steps for Recovery for the hopeless condition of alcoholism. It marked the first time a system was in place that could be worked if the instructions were followed. "Do the Work and you get the Result."

The Twelve Steps

The Twelve Steps are a set of principles, spiritual in nature ... Although based on the work outlined by the Oxford Group, a previous fellowship, the Steps were actually written down for the first time in 1938 during the writing of the Big Book.

The Program

The Program is the system of recovery. Like all programs it is “a set of instructions to be followed in order.” This means that jumping out of sequence does not work the Program. The Program is referred to a couple of times in the Big Book as “a design for living” that really works. It is based on the Twelve Steps, to be used as Tools in our daily life

The Fellowship

The Fellowship is the collection of individuals, groups, and service structure that allow the regular meetings to exist and allows newcomers to find those meetings. The Fellowship is where we find the experience, strength, and hope of our members, whether in a discussion meeting, from the podium at a speakers meeting, or across two cups of coffee in a late-night diner.

The Literature

The Literature refers to those pieces of “conference approved” books, pamphlets, and multi-media presentations that have gone through the process of review and revision by the fellowship through the World Service Organization. The purpose of “conference approved” literature is to ensure that the content is a result of our shared experience in Recovery – not just an opinion from one person.

Conference approved literature includes:

- **Alcoholics Anonymous** – *The Big Book*
- **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions** – *The 12 & 12*
- **Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers** – AA History, the Akron viewpoint from Dr. Bob
- **Pass It On** – AA History, the New York viewpoint from Bill W.
- **AA Comes of Age** – AA organizational history starting with the 1955 World Service Conference.
- **Living Sober** – Daily Guide for living the AA way.
- **Came to Believe** – Exploration of 2nd and 3rd Step topics.
- **Language of the Heart** – Bill Wilson's articles from the Grapevine
- **Experience, Strength & Hope** – a collection of all of the individual stories of recovery from all four editions of the Big Book
- **Daily Reflections** – A book of reflections by AA members for AA members
- And other books from WSO, plus several dozen pamphlets addressing individual topics of interest to those in Recovery.

The Twelve Traditions

The Twelve Traditions are a series of suggested guidelines to ensure the survival of AA and the independence of the individual and groups that compose AA. They are based on our first few decades of trial and error and do not hold the power of law over members or groups. They serve as guides based on our previous experience, strength, and hope as a Fellowship.

Understanding Anonymity

So many in Alcoholics Anonymous, both old-timers and newcomers alike, do not have an understanding of the 11th and 12th Traditions relating to Anonymity; the relationship of Anonymity to the Spiritual Ideals contained in the 12 Steps of AA; and the principles and ideals of Trust, Honesty, Hope, Faith, Courage, Integrity, Willingness, Humility, Brotherly Love, Justice, Perseverance, Spirituality, and Service to One Another.

To the extent that my sponsors explained it to me, and from what I have read from the history of AA, I will try to put this vital issue into some kind of proper perspective.

These selections from AA literature clarify the 11th Tradition and its intent.

In some sections of AA, anonymity is carried to the point of real absurdity. Members are on such a poor basis of communication that they don't even know each other's last names or where each lives.

- *As Bill Sees it, page 241*

Dr. Bob said there were two ways to break the Anonymity Tradition:

- (1) – by giving your name at the public level of press or radio;
- (2) – by being so anonymous that you can't be reached by other drunks.

- *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers, page 264*

The 11th Tradition states, in the short form, "Eleven – Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press,

radio and films." (And we might also add TV at this level for further restriction)

The 12th Tradition states, in the short form, "Twelve – Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." (Even before my own personality)

Dr. Bob stated that within the group, every member should know the first name, last name, address and phone number of all the members in the group. If these are not known, then we as a group are operating above the level of anonymity intended – We are not able to be of Service to One Another in Time of Need.

Did you ever try to look up someone in the phone book (like your sponsor, or someone you're related to, when your head was putting it on you??) without knowing their last name? Or go into a hospital or jail to try to visit or carry a meeting into a sick or incarcerated member, and stand there with your mouth hanging open, when asked, "What is their name?"

No Name, No Visit, No Meeting.

"Sorry about that but we have our policies and procedures, sorry we can't help you."

Let us see what the long form of the 11th and 12th Traditions can give us in understanding Anonymity and the Principles we ought to live by.

11. – Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A. A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA members ought not be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed. Our public relations should be

guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12. – *And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.*

Ahh yes. We are to be anonymous relative to the "General Public", as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. We ought not be publicly identified as members of Alcoholics Anonymous in the press, on the radio, or in films, videos, and TV, media which is disseminated to the General Public. It is a Humility thing; we have no need to say "How great we are!". We think that in this respect the Humility of AA will attract more suffering alcoholics to the program than any amount of advertising or promotion. It is a matter of Trust.

Dr. Bob's comment –

"Since our Tradition on anonymity designates the exact level where the line should be held, it must be obvious to everyone who can read and understand the English language that to maintain anonymity at any other level is definitely a violation of this Tradition. The AA who hides his identity from his fellow AA by using only a given name violates the Tradition just as much as the AA who permits his name to appear in the press in connection with matters pertaining to AA.

"The former is maintaining his anonymity ABOVE the level of press, radio, and films, and the latter is maintaining his anonymity BELOW the level of press, radio, and films - whereas the Tradition states that we should maintain our

anonymity AT the level of press, radio, and films."

Our egos are trying to get attention. We can lose our humility and we are spoiling the great blessing we have been given. The truth is that any one of us may fail to stay sober as a result of our ego and failure to practice the steps in all our affairs. We should be ever mindful that no action we take as individual members should affect AA as a whole of AA. Our very lives depend upon the survival of AA and our Unity. Without AA, all we have left is drunkenness and the slide into oblivion.

The principle of Trust is first and foremost, the foundation of all spiritual principles and ideals, that we should never break another member's anonymity to anyone outside the AA group. To do so would break Trust, and without Trust, all the other principles are Imimpossible.

Has any alcoholic ever been able to be Honest, or practice any of the other principles and ideals, with something or someone he didn't trust?

Of course not...

We may break our own anonymity in the process of trying to help another, but we must never break the anonymity of another.

When TRUST is broached, resentments raise their ugly heads, and all the other principles are out the window, and often times Sobriety. That is why it is so important that no member should ever broach another member's confidence... and especially any broach of confidence between a sponsor and sponsee. Th is applies as well to any and all gossiping between members about what another member did or said.

I well remember what my sponsors burnt into my mind,

"That I should never take any action that would endanger another member's sobriety, because in so doing I endanger my own..."

And that included hitting on members of the opposite sex, especially newcomers.

Probably more members lose their sobriety for this single reason, than all others combined, as a result of the resentments and gossip that rear their ugly heads.

Newcomers are so very vulnerable, so naive, so confused, so fearful, and looking for anything that

will fill that god-awful hole in the gut, for any little bit of acceptance, that any broaching of TRUST can send them into a resentment that could mean their Sobriety and their Life. Their Anonymity, Sobriety, Well-Being and Trust must be protected.

They are the Life Blood of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We protect these things by keeping our own yaps shut – To Protect Our Own Sobriety.

The Insanity of Alcoholism

The Insanity of Alcoholism is NOT the goofy behavior that people exhibit when they are drunk. Everyone who ingests enough alcohol will act goofy.

The Insanity of Alcoholism is the alcoholic's persistent return to alcohol in the face of overwhelming evidence that it is destroying his or her life, over and over again.

There are some in our fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous who have serious mental problems, but most of us joke about how "insane" or "crazy" or "goofy" we are or have been, when what we really are talking about is our emotional immaturity, our impulsiveness, our lack of self-discipline – our character defects if you will. Most of us would have a hard time describing many of our thoughts and actions as being insane. In fact, in some areas of life, we may exhibit a high degree of sanity.

However, there is something about the way we perceive the world around us that has always caused us a great deal of discomfort in simply living our lives.

Our general discomfort with living has much to do with the way we perceive the effects of alcohol. Our falling short of what is called "well-adjusted" is definitely a part of our makeup as an alcoholic. However, that alone does not separate us much from the general population. It is our physical as well as our mental response to alcohol that is INSANE, and that is what separates the alcoholic from the non-alcoholic.

There are two problems alcoholics have with alcohol:

- (1) the obsession of the mind, and
- (2) the compulsion of the body, an incomprehensible craving.

Somewhere along the line, early or late, we develop an obsession with the idea that alcohol eases our minds and solves our problems. Then, our physical response to alcohol manifests in what the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous calls an allergy. Our alcoholic bodies process the alcohol in a manner which causes us to crave more. The alcoholic insanity of our minds tells us that it is a good idea to drink to relieve our stresses and to have fun. Once we start, our alcoholic bodies tell us we must drink more to satisfy the craving.

As every alcoholic should know, that is where the well-known cycle begins, and continues over and over again, leading to death, incarceration, or "wet brain" insanity. What Dr. Silkworth called the "phenomenon of craving," manifesting as an "allergy," is so overpowering that all else comes in second to our primary concern of getting the next drink, even life itself takes second place.

That, my friends, is the "INSANITY OF ALCOHOLISM."

It is only relieved and arrested by total abstinence, and as we have found, by the thorough application of the 12 Steps of AA in our lives and in all of our affairs to achieve a psychic change, a "spiritual awakening," leading to growth and maturity, and a firm grasp of the reality of life and the world about us.

As a young man (with tears in his eyes) in his first AA meeting said:

..."I'm here because I just want to live ...

that's it ... I just want to live"...

It is as Simple as that!!!

*Love and Peace,
Barefoot Bob H.*

What Does “Going to Any Lengths” Mean?

I have been asked this question again and again. I've also brought this subject up to just about every person I have ever worked with through the Steps. What follows is generally my response, taken from two sources. The only thing that I would want to add to this is living the Oxford Group's Four Absolutes of Honesty, Unselfishness, Purity, and Love (which can be found in their reverse negative form in the Big Book at Step 4, Step 10, and Step 11).

– – Barefoot Bob

Taken from the ten points of the “How It Works” reading. Chapter five of the book Alcoholics Anonymous has always been a faithful guide for people who want to practice the Twelve Step Program. The following Ten Points are a summary of the lifesaving directions given in Chapter Five, and are to be considered as part of your daily Program:

- Completely give yourself to this simple Program.
- Practice rigorous honesty.
- Be willing to go to any lengths to recover.
- Be *fearless and thorough* in your practice of the principles.
- Realize that there is *no easier, softer way*.
- Let go of your old ideas absolutely.
- Recognize that half measures will not work.

- Ask God's protection and care with complete abandon.
- Be willing to grow along spiritual lines.
- Accept the following pertinent ideas as proved by AA experience:
 - a) that you cannot manage your own life;
 - b) that probably no human power can restore you to sanity;
 - c) that God can and will if sought.

Taken from parts of Chapter One “Bill's Story” in the Big Book:

PAGE 8 (STEP 1)

No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.

PAGE 12 (STEP 2)

My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.

It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that

growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough? At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

PAGE S 13-16 (STEPS 3 THROUGH 12)

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then I understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.

My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure.

My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain

the new order of things, were the essential requirements.

Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.

While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others.

My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that.

My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to a solution of their problems. It was fortunate, for my old business associates remained skeptical for a year and a half, during which I found little work. I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that when all other measure failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going.

We commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. I have seen hundreds of families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere;

have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted; feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out. I have seen men come out of asylums and resume a vital place in the lives of their families and communities. Business and professional men have regained their standing. There is scarcely any form of trouble and misery which has not been overcome among us. In one western city and its environs there are one thousand of us and our families. We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek. At these informal gatherings one may often see from 50 to 200 persons. We are growing in numbers and power.

There is, however, a vast amount of fun about it all. I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.

Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.

– Bill Wilson, 1954

The Steps

Alcoholics Anonymous is a program of action, and the Twelve Steps are the Program we have followed to attain and maintain Sobriety.

Through the Steps we have the simple and direct action necessary to help us not pick up a drink or any other mind-altering substance outside of direct Medical supervision.

Through the Steps we find the way to deal with the guilt, shame, remorse, and fear that rises when we have stopped medicating ourselves with alcohol (and often with other substances and behaviors).

Through the Steps we learn to face and heal our pasts to give us time in the present to enjoy our lives, to become contributing members of our families and communities, and to live without the Fear that formerly drove our lives.

Through these Steps we achieve a Spiritual Awakening.

Step Zero to Step One

Beginning

This book assumes you have already passed through Step Zero and Step One. If you have not yet explored the First Step, set this book aside until you have completed Step One and are convinced that you aren't an alcoholic.

Step Zero is that point where you understand that your Problem, as shown through excessive drinking and/or drugging, has got to stop. This is not a Step from the Big Book, but everyone we have encountered who has succeeded with finding and maintaining Sobriety reports that they reached this point.

Step Zero

For most of us, Step Zero has been "This must STOP!"

It is not required that even the desire for Sobriety to begin. That can come later.

How can you want Sobriety? How can you want something that was not part of your life before? How many people do you party with who were sober? If you had a period of sobriety from one of the many methods available, or even from a previous exposure to the Twelve Steps, but went back to drinking, how much of your experience was a real connection to being Sober?

You do not have to want Sobriety to begin. You only need to know Step Zero. At this point it is only necessary that you know your life cannot continue on as it has. You do not need to know the

new way yet, but only be convinced that the old way must stop, no matter what!

At this point most alcoholics begin a long struggle to stop on their own – and to stay stopped. In the Big Book this is well described in the chapter "More about Alcoholism":

"Here are some of the methods we have tried:

"Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums we could increase the list ad infinitum."

- Page 31, Alcoholics Anonymous

Since the time when that was written, we have added professional treatment centers, drugs to keep you "sober," therapies, workshops, books, classes, tapes, CDs, websites, and support groups — along with those who oppose one or more of these approaches.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous addresses these other methods in two of their traditions:

Tradition Nine: AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Tradition Ten: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Throughout AA Literature they acknowledge that the Twelve Steps are not the only way to achieve and maintain Sobriety. For some people those other techniques have worked.

Some problem drinkers have simply set their minds to Sobriety, found the battle alone, and won. Others have gone back to church, stopped drinking, and lived new, sober, and successful lives. Some have gone to therapy, found sobriety, and lived healthy, successful lives.

But people in AA know the other side of that reality — we have seen people who have come, achieved success to the point of taking years of Recovery, only to allow their old ways of thinking drag them back down to insanity, institutions, and death.

And death is not the worst thing that can happen when anyone goes back to drinking.

When Step Zero has been achieved, years of struggle can end in disaster.

At that point, you have the choice to try another method, or (if you feel your problem and your life is as we describe it_ you may then choose to join us and work the Steps.

Why Work the Steps?

Step One is difficult. It is a merciless admission that goes against everything an alcoholic has believed about his or her mastery of life.

Many people fight admitting that they are in the grip of a disease and mental compulsion that they cannot consciously master. Despite all evidence they have before them, the true alcoholic believes

that with more strength, with more will, with more determination, they will one day be able to control their drinking and return to drinking without the problems and consequences.

“Many pursue this delusion to the gates of insanity or death!” –

- Page 30

Until they admit to their innermost selves that if they take a single drink, they cannot guarantee how long they will drink, how much they will drink, what they will do while drunk, or where they will come to when they wake up.

“Lack of power, that is our dilemma.”

- Page 45

The powerless of this dilemma makes Step One require a great deal of work, made more difficult by the fact that we do not have the authority to declare any man or woman to be an alcoholic.

“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself, step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.”

Page 31

The First Step requires something simple and very difficult — the new man or woman must admit to themselves if the conditions of Step One are true. This means you must become honest enough to admit that these conditions are already true.

- *Have you reached Step Zero?*
- *Have you tried everything within your power to get sober and to stay sober?*
- *Is your life, with or without alcohol, unmanageable? This means the results of your best thoughts, plans, efforts, and*

actions have been tried and the results have been completely unmanageable by you.

We do know that people who find AA (and not everyone knows about Alcoholics Anonymous) who stay and who actually do The Work of the Twelve steps, do recover.

Even if they don't believe it will work.

Even if they don't like it.

Even if they don't understand it.

Even if they are uncomfortable doing The Work.

Even if they are not Religious.

Even if they don't find the Spirituality others would approve of.

Even if they use the AA Group itself as their Higher Power.

Even if they suffer great reversals in health, love, and finances.

Even if they find great success in health, love, and finances.

Even if they have no idea of what a "spiritual life" might be.

Even if you lived what you thought was a deeply "spiritual life" but returned to drinking and the dark despair that comes with relapse.

Even if you believe there is no hope.

The Twelve Steps do not require that you believe recovery is even possible when you come through the door.

You only need to know that this cannot continue the way you have gone.

You might come in because of a threat from a spouse, or a judge, or a doctor, or an employer.

It doesn't matter.

Show up. Come to see if what we have can help you. Come to see if you are really an alcoholic — or not.

If you decide you are an alcoholic and have seen people with recovery the way you would like to have it, do the Steps.

Do The Work, even if you don't think it will work for you. The Twelve Steps work.

Period.

Four Questions

Only you can decide whether or not you are an alcoholic, although some professionals may offer very strong opinions on the subject.

There are four questions for you to answer to determine if you are an Alcoholic:

1. When you take a drink, can you control how many drinks you will have?
2. When you take a drink, can you control how long the spree will last?
3. When you take a drink, can you control what you will do while drunk?

4. Has the question of whether or not you are an alcoholic come up more than once?

For most alcoholics the answer to the first three questions will be “no,” and the answer to #4 will be “yes.”

If you now know that you are an Alcoholic, or even find that you simply have “the desire to stop drinking,” you qualify as a member of AA.

Principles of Recovery

(The steps are printed on pages 59 & 60 of the Big Book.)

Step 1. – Surrender. (Capitulation to hopelessness.)

Step 2. – Hope. (Step 2 is the mirror image or opposite of step 1. In step 1 we admit that alcohol is our Higher Power, and that our lives are unmanageable. In step 2, we find a different Higher Power who we hope will bring about a return to sanity in the management of our lives.)

Step 3. – Commitment. (The key word in step 3 is decision.)

Step 4. – Honesty. (An inventory of self.)

Step 5. – Truth. (Candid confession to God and another human being.)

Step 6. – Willingness. (Choosing to abandon defects of character.)

Step 7. – Humility. (Standing naked before God, with nothing to hide, and asking that our flaws—in His eyes—be removed.)

Step 8. – Reflection. (Who have we harmed? Are we ready to amend?)

Step 9. – Amendment. (Making direct amends/restitution/correction, etc.)

Step 10. – Vigilance. (Exercising self-discovery, honesty, abandonment, humility, reflection, and amendment on a momentary, daily, and periodic basis.)

Step 11. – Attunement. (Becoming as one with our Father.)

Step 12. – Service. (Awakening into sober usefulness.)

You may have good reason to believe the above distillation could be improved upon. Do it! The purpose of this activity is to sharpen up our thinking about the nature of AA recovery. Honest inquiry and loving debate are essential to deep learning.

Principles of the TRADITIONS: Perhaps you should take a shot at these if you wish. Let us know what you come up with.

And Down to Business. Now for the fun. We have uncovered 36 instances of the word principle in the Big Book. From these we have discovered 31 principles of AA recovery. You may have noticed that in eight instances we are talking specifically about "spiritual principles".

But the "principles" addressed thus far are but a few of the principles that should guide our lives. For example:

Patience, tolerance, understanding, and love are the watchwords.

Big Book, page 118 line 13

These are the four additional principles we once affectionately called PLUT (Patience, Love, Understanding, and Tolerance).

You are going to have an exciting time identifying AA's principles. It is suggested that you and some friends start with the first printed page in the Big Book, and that you each read a paragraph while the others ask themselves if the paragraph contains any basic action guidelines for

recovery from alcoholism. If so, write them down. You may wish to use the following candidates to get started:

Awakening to Principles

Here in Southern California most AA groups read the first 77 lines of Big Book chapter 5, How It Works, at the beginning of their meetings. While reading the 12 steps one encounters...

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Big Book, page 60, line 3

Some of us have asked, "What are these principles?" Anticipating this to be anything but a trivial question, we searched the book for the word principle. It must be important to the program of recovery because it is used 36 times. Appendix II displays all 36 references.

Definition of Principle. Thus aroused, we have explored. The next thing we did was to investigate the definition of principle in our dictionary. Definitions were extracted from Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, published in 1935. It should be a reliable source for word usage as understood over 50 years ago by the authors of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, which was first published in April, 1939.

The Dictionary Definition of "Principle"

Principle, *n* fr ...Latin *principium* beginning, foundation...

2. A source, or origin; that from which anything proceeds; fundamental substance or energy; primordial; ultimate basis or cause....
4. A fundamental truth; a comprehensive law or doctrine from which others are derived, or on which others are founded; a general truth; an elementary proposition or

fundamental assumption; a maxim; an axiom; a postulate.

5. A settled rule of action; a governing law of conduct; an opinion, attitude or belief which exercises a directing influence on the life and behavior; a rule (usually a right rule) of conduct consistently directing one's actions...

One might distill these definitions of principle down to basic rules of action. However, some of our members are opposed to rules, so we adopted the following short definition:

"a principle is a basic action guideline"

Searching the Big Book on the word "Principle", what are the principles of the AA program of recovery? Five of the 36 uses of the word principle are clearly statements of principles: Numbers 1 through 36 below refer to the order in which the statement appears)

- 22) *The first principle of success is that you should never be angry.*

Big Book, page 111, line 1

Although we alcoholics are not saints, it seems the authors of the Big Book thought that our spouses should be. It is obvious that this principle is avoiding anger.

- 28) *Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve.*

Big Book, page 125, line 18

This principle is that we respect the privacy of others, especially fellow members of AA.

- 29) *Giving, rather than getting, will become the guiding principle.*

Big Book, page 128, line 2

We practice service of others rather than self-service.

- 35) & 36) *There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against*

all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.

—HERBERT SPENCER *Big Book*, Appendix II, page 570, lines 16 & 19 (*The principle for us is open mindedness.*)

These are the five easy ones. Another of our 36 examples contains three principles:

25) *Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you socially. The same principle applies in dealing with the children. Big Book, page 115, line 20 (Our relationships with others will be vastly improved when we display courage and good nature, just as when we do not display self-consciousness.*

Five additional examples make direct reference to the steps and traditions of AA as being principles:

The STEPS of AA are principles (and a listing of these appears soon):

9) 12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs...*

Big Book, page 60, line 3

10) *No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles.*

Big Book, page 60, line 8

11) *The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.*

Big Book, page 60, line 9

Traditions are Principles:

1 & 2) *As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.*

Big Book, page xix, lines 8 & 9

3) *Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely*

accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our first International Conference held at Cleveland.

Big Book, page xix, line 27

Thus far we may have uncovered 31 of AA's principles. Four were the easy uses of the word principle in examples 22, 28, 29, and 36. Th ree more were found in 25, and there are the 12 steps and 12 traditions, each being a principle.

Use of the Word Principle in the Big Book

36 instances of "principle" in the Big Book.

1 & 2) *As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.*

Big Book, page xix, lines 8 & 9

3) *Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our first International Conference held at Cleveland.*

Big Book, page xix, line 27

4) *The basic principles of the AA program, it appears, hold good for individuals with many different life-styles, just as the program has brought recovery to those of many different nationalities.*

Big Book, Foreword to the Third Edition

5) *My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs.*

Big Book, page 14, line 29

6) *We feel elimination of our drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs.*

Big Book, page 19, line 7

7) Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.

Big Book, page 42, line 32

8) That was great news to us, for we had assumed we could not make use of spiritual principles unless we accepted many things on faith which seemed difficult to believe.

Big Book, page 47, line 23

9) 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs...

Big Book, page 60, line 3

10) No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles.

Big Book, page 60, line 8

11) The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Big Book, page 60, line 9

12) We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry.

Big Book, page 64, line 30

13) Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding.

Big Book, page 79, line 6

14) Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them.

Big Book, page 83, line 13

15) If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing.

Big Book, page 87, line 26

16) The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.

Big Book, page 93, line 10

17) When dealing with such a person, you had better use everyday language to describe spiritual principles.

Big Book, page 93, line 12

18) We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations.

Big Book, page 93, line 12

19) Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the head of the family will recover.

Big Book, page 97, line 29\

When your prospect has made such reparation as he can to his family, and has thoroughly explained to them the new principles by which he is living, he should proceed to put those principles into action at home.

Big Book, page 98, lines 26 & 28

22) The first principle of success is that you should never be angry.

Big Book, page 111, line 1

23) If you act upon these principles, your husband may stop or moderate.

Big Book, page 112, line 20

24) The same principles which apply to husband number one should be practiced.

Big Book, page 112, line 22

25) Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you socially. The same principle applies in dealing with the children.

Big Book, page 115, line 20

26) Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every department of our lives...

Big Book, page 116, line 30

27) Though it is entirely separate from Alcoholics Anonymous, it uses the general principles of the AA program as a guide for husbands, wives, relatives, friends, and others close to alcoholics.

Big Book, page 121, footnote line 3

28) Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve.

Big Book, page 125, line 18

Big Book, page 128, line 2

30) *Whether the family has spiritual convictions or not, they may do well to examine the principles by which the alcoholic member is trying to live.*

Big Book, page 130, line 21

31) *They can hardly fail to approve these simple principles, though the head of the house still fails somewhat in practicing them.*

Big Book, page 130, line 23

32) *Without much ado, he accepted the principles and procedure that had helped us.*

Big Book, page 139, line 5

33) *The use of spiritual principles in such cases was not so well understood as it is now.*

Big Book, page 156, line 33

34) *Twelve—Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."*

Big Book, Appendix I, page 564, line 32

35) & 36) *"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance— that principle is contempt prior to investigation."*

—HERBERT SPENCER

Big Book, Appendix II, page 570, lines 16

A Definition of Alcoholism

"Alcoholism is a primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and fatal. It is characterized by continuous or periodic impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking, most notably denial."

"Primary" refers to the nature of alcoholism as a disease entity in addition to and separate from other pathophysiologic states which may be associated with it.

"Primary" suggests that alcoholism, as an addiction, is not a symptom of an underlying disease state.

"Disease" means an involuntary disability. It represents the sum of the abnormal phenomena displayed by a group of individuals. These phenomena are associated with a specified common set of characteristics by which these individuals differ from the norm, and which places them at a disadvantage.

Brief Review of Steps 1, 2, & 3

Having covered the information in pages xxiii through page 63 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, we asked ourselves the following questions when taking the first three Steps.

Step 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable.

- If, when I honestly want to, can I quit entirely (because of the mental obsession), or if when drinking, do I have little control over the amount I take (because of the physical allergy)?
 - If you've answered "no" to the first part and "yes" to the second, you're probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer. (page 30)
 - Drunk or sober (suffering from "untreated alcoholism"), do I have trouble with personal relationships? Can I control my emotional natures? Am I a prey to misery and depression? Can I make a living (a happy and contented life)? Do I have a feeling of uselessness? Am I full of fear? Am I unhappy? Do I find that I can't seem to be of real help to other people? (page 52)
 - Do I fully concede to my innermost self that I am alcoholic? (page 44)
- Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself? (page 47)
 - Do I have a conception of that Power which makes sense to me? (page 46)
 - When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is or He isn't. What is my choice to be? (page 53)

Step 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Third Step Decision

"Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children."

Big Book, page 62

To affirm this decision, we say the Third Step Prayer:

"God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Step 2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Big Book, page 63, Step 4

In the Third Step we decided to turn our thoughts and actions over to the care of God. The way we carry out that decision is by taking the actions of Steps 4 through 9. We found in Chapter 4, “We Agnostics”, that God dwells deep down within us. We’ve been blocked from God’s Power

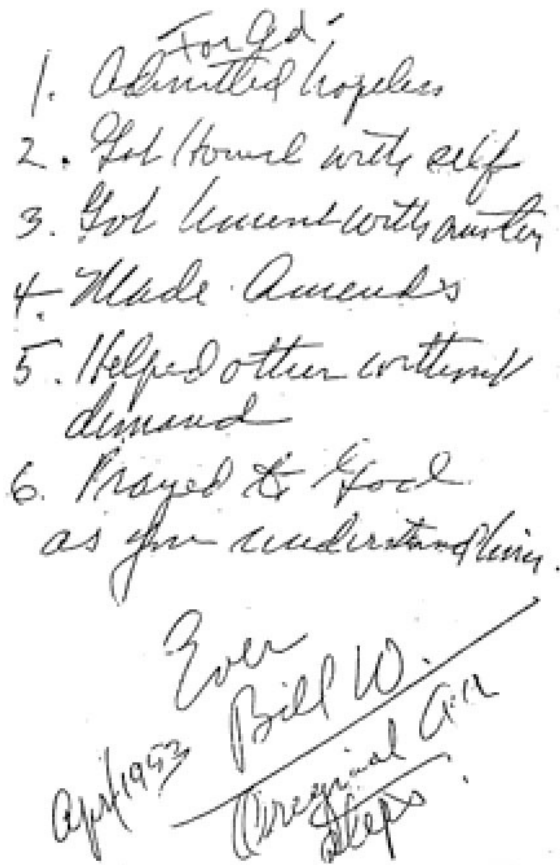
because of our own self-will – our character defects and shortcomings (i.e. selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fear, guilt, shame, remorse, anger, etc.) The first step of getting us “unblocked” is Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 4 - from the booklet "Simple Directions"¹

Fearless and Moral Inventory

The AA Steps owe a great deal of their structure to the six steps of the original Oxford Group, a Christian fellowship dedicated to the ideal fellowship of the First Century church.

When asked about The Oxford Group's "Steps", Bill W. broke them into six and wrote the following scrap to explain their process:

- 
- For God -
1. Admitted helplessness
 2. Got honest with self
 3. Got honest with another
 4. Made Amends
 5. Helped others with their demand
 6. Prayed to God as you understand Him.
- Ever
Bill W.
Apr/1953
Original AA
Steps.

Our Steps 4 through 9 are a clarification of the Oxford Group's simple Step Four "Make Amends". The expansion was intended to break down the process to allow an alcoholic to do each part of the process and do it as thoroughly as possible.

If you have made it to Step Three, your sponsor and your meetings will confirm that the next Step is to be taken immediately. In the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the direction begins in Chapter Five, at the bottom of page 63.

"Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted."

It is the intent of this guide to help make a searching and moral inventory as guided by the book.

Steps One, Two, and Three did not create the problem — they are the statements of truth regarding your disease and your situation. They are the beginning of the leveling of pride and ego, which we are told will become a lifelong process. In each of these steps you begin the difficult process of telling the truth.

You did not become an alcoholic because you admitted to Step One. You simply admitted what was already true.

You did not create a Higher Power through Step Two; you simply admitted to the truth that you are

¹ "Simple Directions" is available as a free download from directions.anonymousreview.org, and may also be purchased as a separate booklet through the link on that web page.

not God or the Higher Power of your personal understanding.

In Step Th ree you do not achieve anything beyond taking that deep breath to begin The Work of recovery.

“The Work” is often referenced in AA meetings, but sometimes people can go for years without knowing what “The Work” is. For simplicity, let us take a moment to define “The Work” for your own progress.

The Big Book is clearly divided between the basic text of the front (Cover through Page 164, or Page 181 to include Dr. Bob’s Nightmare, depending on who you are talking to) and the stories in the back.

But upon closer examination we find a second structure in the book. The area from the Cover through Page 52 is a summary for Step One — defining alcoholism and the alcoholic, with an introduction to the spiritual nature of our disease.

On Page 52 (although discussion of the meat of Step Two has already begun), there is a paragraph that gives the summation of “our lives had become unmanageable.” It is sometimes called The Bedevilments*.

The previous pages discuss the changes seen in the 1930s as the result of technological progress. The authors and early members of our fellowship all came from a time when “man will never fly” had been changed to include regularly scheduled flights to China from San Francisco. They had seen horses and carriages give way to automobiles. They had seen communications move from newspapers and telegraphy to newsreels, movies, radio, and telephones.

The paragraph on Page 52 says:

“We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn’t apply to our human problems this same readiness to change the point of view. We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn’t control our emotional natures, we were a prey

to misery and depression, we couldn’t make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people - was not a basic solution of these bedevilments more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight? Of course it was.”*

Big Book, Ppage 52

At each of the statements it is best to pause, to ask if that part of the paragraph applies to you.

- . Were you having trouble with personal relationships?
- . Were you able to control your emotions?
- . Were you prey to misery and depression?
- . Could you make a living?
- . Were you full of fear?
- . Were you unhappy?
- . Were you able to be of real help to other people?
- . Do you see that your solution of these bedevilments is more important than other pursuits?

The Bedevilments on Page 52 are the end of Step One and the opening to the work of Step Two.

On page 88 you are at the end of Step Eleven.

Page 89, the chapter “Working with Others” is the beginning of Step Twelve, which continues through the rest of the book, including the stories in the back. Those stories are people sharing their Experience, Strength, and Hope with you as their Twelve Step call on you.

The 36 pages from page 52 to page 88 contain Steps Two through Step Eleven. These pages, these Steps, are “The Work.”

Do the Work and you get the result!

You are the only one who can say if you are willing to move forward, but as with the rest of

your work in the Twelve Steps, it is best to have an advisor, a “native guide” for the new territory – a Sponsor.

Understand that many of the men and women with double-digit sobriety report that they have not seen anyone start a Fourth Step and hesitate before beginning their amends in Step Nine and stay sober!

The process requires completion. Alcoholics are great beginners, but not so good on finishing what they start. If you make the commitment, then take the action and the results will follow. Finish this process!

You will never feel finished. The book tells us this is “the beginning of a lifelong process,” but it also tells us that this way of life is “a design for living that really works.”

It is suggested that you follow the direction of your sponsor. If you are not using a sponsor, it is important that you have someone who can guide you - — do not attempt this process on your own. You can never see your eye with that same eye. You must use a mirror, and your sponsor is your mirror.

. The pressure built by performing the Inventory can only be reduced through the thorough examination and organization of what comes out of it. Your sponsor will help you organize and prioritize the results — what is revelation, what is ego, what is fear, what is pride, and what is an asset.

. Through the Fifth Step you will come to see yourself, possibly for the first time.

In the Sixth Step you will realize what parts of you are either defective, or which are lacking, and become willing to have those defects and shortcomings removed.

In the Seventh Step you will take the same deep breath you took in Step Th ree to turn everything over to the Higher Power which you have come to believe. You will not tell that Higher Power what is to be removed or to be kept — you simply ask to have everything that stands in the way of your service to others removed.

In Step Eight you will return to this inventory (most people add to the list begun in Step Four) to determine how you and your disease have damaged the people, institutions, and relationships around you. You will find that (if you are to stay sober) you are willing to do whatever is required to make those damages heal, or at least make it better.

In Step Nine you will step back into the world to heal the damage of your past and establish a new foundation for life without the weight and the guilt, the shame, the fear, and the selfishness of your past.

But none of this can begin without the thorough housecleaning required on Page 63 and 64 of the Big Book.

Prepare yourself for this process. Discuss your fears with your Sponsor. Gather your materials and begin.

Are You Ready To Take The 3rd Step Prayer?

“God I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!”²

Remember, the next paragraph on Page 63 says “The wording, of course, is quite optional.” It is important that you mean what you pray. If you

² See “The Full Prayer” for an expansion of this suggested prayer, but remember the following paragraph tells us that the wording is optional and as is your way of saying a prayer.

can take the words as presented and come to mean them, the prayer as written can work for you.

If, however, you find it hard to relate to the words as written, if you do not use “Thee” and “Thine” as part of your normal language, you can take the prayer and restate it in your own words so that you can say a heartfelt prayer of surrender and willingness to proceed with your Recovery.

An Important Note

The Big Book says at the end of Step 3 (emphasis added):

“NEXT we launch out on a course of VIGOROUS action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision (Step 3) was a vital and crucial step (so it’s important), it could have LITTLE PERMANENT EFFECT (it doesn’t amount to much) unless AT ONCE (immediately or now) followed by a STRENUOUS EFFORT to face (where we face these things is in Steps 4 - 6), AND to be rid of (where we get rid of these things is in Steps 7 - 9), the things in ourselves which had been blocking us (we can’t turn our will and our lives over to the care of God until we get unblocked from doing so by immediately and quickly working Steps Four through Nine). Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Preparation

Before he died, Dr. Bob told Bill “Keep it Simple.” You can follow that in your Inventory.

The first thing you need to do is talk with your sponsor. Does your sponsor agree that you are ready to take this next step? Go through this booklet with your sponsor to be sure that he, or she, agrees with the process it presents. Your sponsor may have used a different system and if anything is found in these pages that are in conflict with your sponsor, go with the direction your sponsor gives you. Your sponsor knows you better than the authors of this booklet!

Get a notebook to dedicate to your Inventory. It can be a simple spiral bound notebook, a composition book or other empty volume. You can usually find good ones in dollar stores, or you might have one left over from a previous “good intention” attempt at the Steps which is still blank and usable.

Get two or three reliable pens or pencils with you. The excuses “my pen stopped working” or “my pencil broke” will not be available.

Have your own copy of the Big Book and, if your sponsor agrees, a copy of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Your sponsor may suggest a certain number of sessions per week — 20-60 minutes committed in advance. Your schedule may only allow one session per week or even time every day — make this decision with your sponsor.

Try to find a place where you can concentrate on the work at hand. It should be quiet — free of distractions but you will hear of people who worked at their inventories while the kids made noise elsewhere in the house, or sitting in their car at a lake or wooded spot, or sitting in a coffee shop, or a public library, or even a special “writing” meeting occasionally offered by individual AA groups. You will find you can complete your Inventory if your commitment is to finish and is not dependent on some condition you set before you begin.

When you sit down to write, be comfortable and take a few moments to be quiet. Pray and meditate as you feel is appropriate — you may be able to find the quiet you need in a few moments, or you may need ten or twenty minutes of prayer and meditation to begin.

Don’t try to decide in advance what you should or should not write down. If you think of it, write it down.

If you are writing an inventory after a relapse, talk to your sponsor. Most sponsors tell a

returning member of AA not to depend on the previous inventory (or inventories). The issues raised on those previous inventories were not handled by someone who stayed sober.

Remember, we can write too little for our Inventory, but we can never write too much.

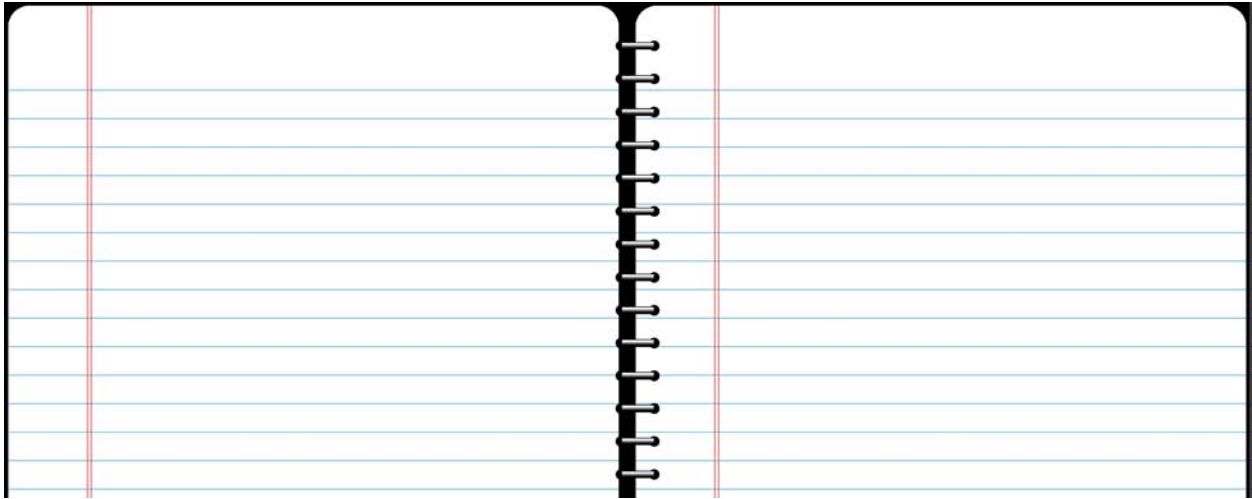
What Your Inventory is NOT

Your Inventory is not a long narrative to explain everything. Your sponsor may (or may not) approve of you writing such a narrative as part of your recovery, but that is not your Inventory. The Inventory is clearly shown in the Big Book and this guide is to help you complete that process.

You may not like, agree with, understand, or want to do some of this work. We do not care what you like, agree with, understand, or want to do. We care what you do! What you like, agree with, understand, or want to do is what brought you here.

This is the work you must do to stay sober. As the shoe company ad says — “Just do it!”

A 4th Step Notebook



Page One

Open the notebook and on the first page write your name, how to contact you, and whatever else your Sponsor feels you should put on that page. Sometimes that can include the date of sobriety, or a request that anyone finding your notebook not read it — almost everyone doing an Inventory chooses to keep their unfinished inventory under lock and key.

The Two Page Spread

When you open the notebook you have a two page spread in front of you. Use that to your advantage.

On the right side, draw a line approximately in the middle.

On the right side, use the basic red-line margin as your first column.

You will do several sections of the inventory, but under each section you will follow the same

format. On each section you work down the column, not across.

Take that deep breath again, become calm, and put your pencil to the paper.

Column One: Names

On the left side of the red margin, write the first name of the person who appears on your Inventory. Work down, not across.

Write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line, write a name, ... It does not matter how much you feel about this person, institution, or situation — write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line.

If you have someone special that you have a lot to write about — write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line, write a name, ...

That is not a suggestion — that is a direction. You will see why we do this in the next stage.

You will do several lists. You will list your resentments. You will list your fears. You will list your sexual misconduct.

For each section, you will write a name, skip a line, and write a name.

Some names may appear on more than one list.

When you can look at the list for 15 or 20 minutes and not come up with a new name, then you are ready to do the next column.

Column Two: Why Are They On Your List?

When you have your list of names, you will be tempted to write a long narrative of how they have wronged you. Your sponsor may decide you should write such a narrative, but that is not your Inventory. That is a long narrative of how the world has wronged you, and it will not keep you sober!

For your inventory, you need to identify exactly why each of these names has appeared on your list, and do so in a clear and simple manner. Think of it as a report — “just the facts.” What would someone in that room have seen?

You may want to tell what someone else thought or wanted. Don’t do it. You do not know what someone else thought or wanted. Even if they told you, they might have been lying. You don’t know.

Why they are on your list should be considered and the shortest possible statement will cut to the core of your reaction to them and what they did, or that you may think they did.

Here is the example given on Page 65:

<i>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause</i>	<i>Affects my:</i>
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress. Brown may get my job at the office.	Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Security.
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut—she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend. She's a gossip.	Self-esteem (fear) Personal relationship. Self-esteem (fear)
My employer	Unreasonable—Unjust — Overbearing — Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account.	Self-esteem (fear) Security.
My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride—Personal sex relations— Security (fear)

Look closely at the sample from Page 65 in the Big Book. The name with the longest reason for being on the list uses only 19 words. We are learning to discipline ourselves and this is an exercise where you refrain from “explaining.” When you write more about why they are on your list, you begin explaining why they are wrong and why you were right, or the other way around.

No more than 19 words per name in the corresponding second column.

That is not a suggestion; that is a rule. You write a maximum of 19 words per name.

What matters is your perception, and what you thought and did. Short and sweet. Keep it simple.

In this example, the one who has the most written gets just 19 words. If we are following the directions, you should be able to state, in 19 words or less, exactly why they are on your list. When you write the reason for the name being on our list, you are to tell us what happened. This column is reporting — even the phrase like “she’s a nut” might be allowed if that is why she is on your list, even if you aren’t qualified to make a determination of another person’s sanity.

Write no more than 19 words, no matter what.
Do not explain; just say why they are on your list.

Don't rush it, but don't drag your feet.

Name	Why on the list (19 words <u>MAXIMUM</u>)
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife; told my wife about my mistress; Brown may get my job at the office.
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut - snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking, he's my friend. She's a gossip.
Employer (Name)	Unreasonable - Unjust - Overbearing. Threatens to fire me for dinking and padding my expense account.
Wife (Name)	Misunderstand and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.
Ms. Mary (1st Grade)	Made fun of my voice in front of the class.
Becky	Laughed at me in front of my friends in cafeteria. Gave me the nickname "Squirrely"
Cousin Ralph	Had better toys than me, wouldn't share them or let me take any home.
Dr. Phiro	Told my parents about my test results before telling me,

Column Three: What It Affects

Here is your chance to tell what that person, ideal, institution or situation threatened.

- Was it your personal standing or position?
- Your Pride?
- Your financial security?
- Your self-esteem?
- The way it caused other people to view you?
- Your sexual relationships?
- Your business relationships or friendships?
- Your legal position?
- Your criminal activities?

Do you have something that was affected that is NOT listed in the examples? Later in this booklet you will find a list of suggestions from the One Way Group in Los Angeles from around 1960. They may help you fill out your third column.

Affects my ...
Sex relations, self-esteem (fear)
Security
Personal relationships, self-esteem (fear)
Self esteem (fear), security
Pride - Personal sex relations
Security (fear)
Pride, self-esteem, relationships with classmates.
Pride, self-esteem, relationship with my friends.
Greed, Pride, Envy, felt I did not deserve nice toys.
Pride, fear, how my parents

On Sex

You are expected to list your resentments, your fears, and your sexual conduct. You will also deal with people you have harmed (Step 8). Use the same format — write a name, skip a line, write a name (or some indicator), even if you can't think of the specific name of the person involved.

On page 70 the Big Book says:

"To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache."

Column Four: Watch This Space

Column Four will take up the last column of your two-page spread. Leave this column blank until you get together with your sponsor for your Fifth Step.

Assets

Following the directions means following all of the directions. For your inventory this will include your Assets.

A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking complete inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade.

Page 64

The purpose of doing an inventory of your Assets is not to give you a chance to reduce the impact of your fears, your resentments, your sexual conduct, or the people you have harmed.

In the same way people may use the “Seven Deadly Sins” as a guide to their defects, it may be appropriate to use the “Seven Heavenly Virtues” in relation to your Assets. This is a simple list and may be outside your spiritual structure — it is intended as a focus for your Inventory. All of the world’s faiths and codes of ethics have similar lists of goals and positive attributes we try to achieve.

Chastity — This is not simply the maintaining of sexual virginity until marriage, but also your conduct in all areas of sex. Did you lie for sex, manipulate, cheat on your spouse, or otherwise place your personal desire over your behavior.

Temperance — This is not simply avoiding alcohol, which we have admitted to failure in our participation of our First Step. This idea is the ability to be moderate in all areas — food, righteousness, pride, sex, possessions, etc. Were you temperate in any of the areas of your life?

Charity — Did you care for others with your time, resources, and affections, or did you give to get? Was your generosity based on helping the other person or institution, or on what benefit you would receive in pride, goods, services, recognition, or reputation?

Diligence — Did you complete what you began? Did you complete work or projects only so far as your return was concerned? Do you have a long list of accomplishments or a trail of broken promises, of beginnings without completion?

Patience — Could you wait for things to turn out or did you push, become frustrated, manipulate, and demand? Was your patience complete or measured to the level of getting what you wanted?

Kindness — Were you kind to others? To strangers? To animals? To children — your own and others? Was your kindness followed with gossip or backbiting? Was it done to feel or show your superiority? Was the focus of your kindness on others or on yourself?

Humility — Were you able to go unrecognized and be satisfied that the right thing was done? Did you want or demand that people recognize your actions and that credit was not assigned to someone other than you?

Gifts

Did you have Gifts? These would be abilities that just seemed to come easily to you in the way of talent, understanding, or intuition. Did you share those gifts for the benefit of others or did you use them to manipulate events to your own ends?

If you were given the gift of Leadership, did you use it to Lead and benefit those who would follow, or did you use it to grab as much as you could or get other people to do what you wanted them to do?

If you could Comfort, did you withhold that comfort until your target gave you what you wanted, or provided something you could use to satisfy your own greed or desire before you would use your gift?

Did you have talents in areas that brought benefit or comfort to others? Music? Counseling? Cooking? Organizing? Did you use these talents to your own ends or to the benefit of others?

Was your Asset something that was a benefit to those around you, or used as a weapon to control situations and people to feed your own desires?

Use a fresh page in your notebook and write a list of assets, gifts, talents, or abilities you feel you have been given. What have you been given the talent to do?

As you did with your Names, work down the column.

Beside each Asset, write how you have used it.

The purpose of knowing your Assets is to show where you have been given a gift, and where you have abused that gift in the course of your Alcoholism.

If you identify an Asset that you have used correctly — do not try to “fix” it! Be grateful and, when the time comes, be ready to turn that asset over to your Higher Power to allow it to benefit those you would help.

It is the nature of alcoholics in the throes of the disease to injure and abuse other people and to lessen and abuse themselves in the constant struggle for more of everything. We demanded more money, sex, power, prestige, possessions, or

satisfaction. But no matter how great our acquisitions, we were never satisfied.

We take more pride in our ability to be more defective than others and judge everything about ourselves as defective.

In the Ninth Step promises we are told:

“No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.”

Big Book, page 96

Judgment

One of the most important lessons we learn is that our judgment of others, or ourselves, has been damaged by our disease. What we consider our most wonderful feature may turn out to be damaging to other people. We find that our worst history becomes our greatest asset in helping others.

At this point we not only need to work at our willingness to have our defects removed and our shortcomings corrected, but become willing to use our assets as they were intended – for the benefit of others – or to let them go.

Accepting that we have had assets, and that we have not used those assets properly is a final phase in becoming willing to have the Higher Power we found in Steps Two and Three take over everything in our lives.

Our defects. Our shortcomings. Our assets.

Everything!

4th Step Prompts

The directions for the 4th Step inventory are found on pages 64 – 72 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Use page 65 as a model for the inventory process. The book suggests we inventory three areas of our lives – three manifestations of self: resentment, fear, and our conduct – with emphasis on sex.

Here is a list of people, institutions, and principles that may be helpful in your resentment inventory. Check the ones you are angry with, resent, or feel ill will toward. Add any additional names that are not on this list.

Resentment Prompts — People

Father (Step)	Uncles	Creditors	Probation Officers
Mother (Step)	Cousins	Childhood Friends	AA Friends
Sisters (Step)	Clergy	School Friends	U.S. Service Friends
Brothers (Step)	Police	Teachers	
Grandmother	Lawyers	Life Long Friends	Plus others not listed
Grandfather	Judges	Best Friends	
In-Laws	Doctors	Acquaintances	
Husbands	Employers	Girl Friends	
Wives	Employees	Boy Friends	
Aunts	Coworkers	Parole Officers	

Resentment Prompts — Institutions

Marriage	Law	Mental Health System
Bible	Authority	Philosophy
Church	Government	Nationality
Religion	Education System	
Races	Correctional System	Plus others not listed

Resentment Prompts — Principles

God or Deity	Death	Adultery
Retribution	Life after Death	Golden Rule
Ten Commandments	Heaven	Seven Deadly Sins
Jesus Christ	Hell	
Satan	Sin	Plus others not listed

Fear Prompts

God	Parents	Physical Pain	Hospitals
Dying	Losing a Wife	Fear	Responsibility
Insanity	Losing a Husband	Drowning	Feelings
Insecurity	Losing a Child	Men	Getting Old
Rejection	Animals	Women	Hurting Others
Loneliness	Insects	Being Alone	Violence
Diseases	Police	People	Writing Inventory
Alcohol	Jail	Crying	Being Alive
Drugs	Doctors	Poverty	Government
Relapse	Stealing	Races	Gangs
Sex	Creditors	The Unknown	Gossip
Sin	Being Found Out	Abandonment	Wealthy People
Self-Expression	Homosexuals &	Intimacy	Guns
Authority	Lesbians	Disapproval	Change
Heights	Failure	Rejection	
Unemployment	Success	Confrontation	Plus others not listed
Employment	Responsibility	Sobriety	

Sex Prompts

On page 70 the Big Book says, “To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder

into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.”

Abortion	Masochism (Mental or	Molesting	Sexual Repression
Adultery	Physical pain on self)	Pornography	Fetish
Animal Sex	Rape (Statutory or	Prostitution	Transvestism
Incest	Forced)	Fraud Sex (False	
Sadism (Mental or	Same Sex	Promises)	Plus others not listed
Physical pain on	Any deviation from	Masturbation	
others)	normal	Arson (Re: desire)	

The Sex ideal

Dear God, please help me to see what YOU want for me regarding relationships with others and my sex life.

Prayers in the 4th Step:

"We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

Big Book, page 67

"We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be."

Big Book, page 68

"We subjected each relation to this test — was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them."

Big Book, page 69

"In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it."

Big Book, page 69

"We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing."

Big Book, page 70

Sharing the Inventory

Step Five

“This is the step that separates the men from boys” (or the girls from women). Step Five breaks the pattern of secrets and isolation that have kept us drunk and held down by our disease.”

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 63

Your Sponsor is one of the tools of the program and like any tool it will not help you if you do not use it appropriately. Your Sponsor will give you some directions on how your Fifth Step will be conducted — the place, time, duration, and process.

Most Fifth Steps are done with the Sponsor and the person whose Fifth Step is being heard separated from distractions. Your Sponsor may want you to go to a special location (your home, the Sponsor’s home, a peaceful outdoor location, etc.) to get this personal time — the goal is to remove distractions so you can concentrate on the work of breaking the lifetime habit of keeping the secrets and hiding the truth from yourself and others.

This is when you will use Column Four on your Inventory. It is commonly called “What is Your Part?”

Before taking Step Five we are given some specific directions to review our work so far.

“If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their

fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can. “

Big Book, page 70

“When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.”

Big Book, page 75

There is no “perfect” Fourth Step — the World Service Office is not reserving a special niche for your inventory to show the world how an inventory should be done. You do your Fourth the very best you can do it and, most often, will find that there is enough relief from the past to move forward with your Recovery.

There is only one way to do it wrong. To not do it!

Your Sponsor will probably ask questions to clarify some of the points you have written. It will be your opportunity to give more detail on the 19 words you were allowed for on your list.

You may be directed to write into the fourth column of the inventory to identify the exact nature of the problem. What was your part in this entry on the Inventory? What does it tell you

about yourself, your personal defects, or your shortcomings?

A Sponsor will usually tell you something of their own story to show how they have had to deal with items from their own Inventory to give you a real example of how a similar problem was handled in the Sponsor's own inventory. Your Sponsor will also guide you away from focus on how others have harmed you, but how you have participated in the process of stepping on their toes and causing them to retaliate. Sometimes a Sponsor will need to point out when you have been taking something as a personal injury that was simply a fact of life affecting others at the same time.

On page 46 of the Twelve and Twelve it says:

"The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some assets which can be noted along with his liabilities. This tends to clear away morbidity and encourage balance. As soon as he begins to be more objective, the newcomer can fearlessly, rather than fearfully, look at his own defects."

You do not need to understand the process. This is not about building your intellectual strength, but getting down to the basic, honest feelings that have been the foundation of your resentments, fears, and relationships.

Let your Sponsor guide you and know that there is nothing on your list that does not have a name — and a name means someone else has done it, felt it, or had to deal with it. You are not alone.

It is important that you not try to do a Fifth Step alone. You use an Inventory to focus on your own problems, not the defects of the names on your lists. It is for you, your discovery of your own defects and short-comings, your own spiritual journey, and cleaning your side of the street.

You will most likely think of more to go on an inventory after you do your Fifth Step and it doesn't matter what you call the continuation of your Inventory. The Tenth Step says "Continued to take personal inventory..." so you might want to look at additions as part of your Tenth Step or a new Fourth Step.

You may find there is a particular area of your life where you want to focus on a new inventory — your marriage, secret crimes (such as stealing, hidden judgments, gossip, withholding care or money, or connection with children or parents, etc.). Discuss these with your Sponsor to determine the best way to approach such new housecleanings.

The only thing that matters is doing the Work and putting pen to paper. Just do it. Your Fourth Step is a real milestone in your commitment and progress to your Recovery.

If you've answered the above questions to your satisfaction, you're ready for Steps 6 & 7.

The Secret Steps

Step Six

The Big Book only takes a paragraph on doing Step Six:

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand? If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

"When ready, we say something like this:

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

"We have then completed Step Seven.

"Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead."

Let's look at Steps Eight and Nine."

We are often unwilling to give up our defects because we get benefits. We manipulate other people to get what we want or we get to avoid what we don't like. We get to be irresponsible and we get to continue our historical indulgence of "me, Me ME!"

What would life be like without these old, comfortable, and familiar defects? Would we be willing to live the life our Higher Power guides us to live?

Would we be willing to live without our indulgence and control that has marked our previous life? And if we are not willing, are we willing to become willing?

- Are you now ready to let God remove from you all the things which you have admitted are objectionable in Steps 4 & 5?
- Can He (God) now take them all — every one of them?
- If we are not entirely ready, we pray for the willingness?

Step Seven

When you are honestly able to answer those questions "yes," you are ready to move forward to Step Seven and that Step has even fewer words in the Big Book than Step Six.

If we are ready, we pray the “7th Step Prayer” (page 76):

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.”

Remember, the prayers given for Steps Three and Seven say they are only suggestions. You may choose your own words so long as they express the idea behind these two prayers and that those words come from your heart.

Remember “Faith without Works is dead,” but so is “Works without Faith.” Your willingness to give up your old ways, your old desires, and your old defects must be as sincere as you can make it, even if that willingness is not perfect.

In AA, you will see others come in, learn how to quote the Big Book, to parrot back the sayings they hear in meetings, but know that they really only seek the approval of others in their meetings without needing to make a real change.

See also - “The Full Prayer”

Step Seven Worksheet

One of our visitors asked us if we knew of a Step Seven worksheet. There are, of course, a plethora of such things, most of them for sale somewhere. One of our members was curious about creating something more of a Step 7 think-sheet. And he did. And it's free. And here it is.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

What shortcomings?

The “*exact nature of our wrongs*” in step 5 is expressed in terms of “defects of character” in step 6, and offered up to God for removal as “shortcomings” in step 7. Bill Wilson, when asked why he used three different sets of words to define character defects, said it was to avoid repetition. Therefore, he intended that there be no significant distinction. Some members waste time needlessly by differentiating the three expressions, which we term, simply, as character defects.

When step 5 is performed well, we leave with a list of our character defects. In step 6, we progressively become willing to have these removed from us, and in step 7, we pray that they might be removed.

Make a grid similar to that below and list your defects of character in it. If an example we have entered applies to you, let it remain. If not, replace it with one of yours that is not listed.

Character Defect	Willingness to have removed
ABUSIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANGER	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISHONESTY	<input type="checkbox"/>
FEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>
INFIDELITY	<input type="checkbox"/>
IRRESPONSIBILITY	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROCRASTINATION*	<input type="checkbox"/>
STINGINESS	<input type="checkbox"/>
THIEVERY	<input type="checkbox"/>
THOUGHTLESSNESS/	<input type="checkbox"/>

Willingness for Removal

We have identified five possible levels of your willingness to have each character defect removed. These are:

- 1) Already removed
- 2) Absolutely willing
- 3) Almost willing
- 4) Give me more time
- 5) Never

Place one of these level indicators in the right column of the grid for each character defect.

As you know from reading the 12&12, our stubborn insistence to “never” allow a defect to be removed must, itself, be removed.

If your willingness level for any item is not 1 or 2, you will want to repeat the exercise again later.

We are certain that God will not remove from alcoholics the defects of character that we do not admit we have. This fact explains one of the reasons we must take steps 4 and 5. We also know that God may remove our defects only to the extent that we are willing for them to be removed. That is why we take step 6. He does not intrude upon our private desires to cohabit with the trash in the garbage can.

Describe your level of humility

- 1) I am so low I cohabit with worms.
- 2) I deserve contempt and condemnation.
- 3) I am worthless.
- 4) I am filled with guilt, shame, remorse and self-loathing.
- 5) I feel like being totally honest.
- 6) I have little interest in impressing others.
- 7) I have nothing to hide from God
- 8) I am coming to really know who I am.

Humility?

Are you humble? Place a check mark next to each of the statements in the table which identifies your level of humility?

Even though the dictionary says that humility describes one of lower status that is not the spiritual significance of humility. Therefore, the first four statements above describe humiliation, not humility.

The root is “hum”, the same root as in humus and humor. For us, humility means “down to earth”.

Humility means honest, real, and without phoniness as in statements 5 through 8 above. Our role model, Mother Theresa had it right on when she said, “If you are truly humble, nothing can touch you, neither disgrace nor praise, because you know who you are.”

So, we enter into step 7 with honesty, willing to stand naked, so to speak, before God, hiding nothing, and with no hidden motives.

More about God

In Step 7, we ask God to do something – to remove our shortcomings. But not all conceptions of a Higher Power (HP) are likely to improve us. Some of the HPs we have encountered are a tree, a moving van, a rock, the classic light bulb, and even the AA Group itself, which is suggested as a last resort starting point in AA literature. Amongst these, the only possible candidate for removing shortcomings might be the AA Group.

However, we think it is not prudent to go through your defects catalogue before your Group. You would be exposing yourself unnecessarily. They would not take the time and, even if they did, you would get all kinds of confused and incompatible reactions from them. At best, the Group, or even your sponsor, might give you some insight into the nature of your wrongs and some remedial possibilities.

So, you might as well bite the bullet and open yourself up to the Spiritual source, which we might as well call “God” for communication purposes. Here is an opportunity for you to identify further your own conception of God. This is not completely a true-false exercise. Some of your responses might require some contemplation. Thinking deeply on these questions is the benefit of doing it.

Your Own Conception of God

- 1) What is the name of your Higher Power (HP)?
- 2) Where is your HP located?
- 3) What is the primary location of your HP at the time you are meditating or praying?
- 4) If you usually pray on your knees, why do you?
- 5) Can your HP read your thoughts when you pray? Does your HP hear you better when you speak aloud?
- 6) Is your motive underlying the prayer as important as the thoughts and words of the prayer itself?
- 7) Should your message be specific and precise, or is it OK to be vague in your requests to your HP?
- 8) Place a checkmark next to the defects which God is likely to remove?
 - ___ Defects of which you are not aware.
 - ___ Defects that stand in the way of your usefulness to God.
 - ___ Defects that stand in the way of your usefulness to others.
 - ___ Defects that annoy you.

- ___ Defects that interfere with your happiness.
- 9) Once you have asked your HP to remove your defects (shortcomings, will they be gone?
 - 10) Does your HP reward you when you comply with His will?
 - 11) Does your HP punish you when you do not comply with His will?
 - 12) Is it necessary for you to attend or be a member of a church?

The Prayer

We are tempted to print out the seventh step prayer for you. However, this is a work sheet. Find the prayer in the Big Book and write all 56 words of it in the space below.

Even if you rephrase the prayer into your own words, the writing will help you double-check your thoroughness.

Does your understanding of the prayer include the meaning of all of the words in the prayer from the book?

HANDWRITE THE SEVENTH STEP PRAYER FROM THE BOOK

It is curious to note that we ask only for the removal of defects of character which stand in the way of our usefulness to God and our fellows. What about the ones that are painful to us? (See also "The Full Prayer)

The Full Prayer

It was not the purpose of either of the Prayers in Steps 3 and 7 to stand on their own.

There is no “Amen” at the end of the Prayer in Step 3. The prayer in Step 7 picks up exactly where the first prayer leaves off.

Between the “two prayers” you do your fourth and fifth steps to break the cycle of secrecy and self-hate that has run our lives to the point where we have placed an appropriate focus on ourselves and the personal defects we must surrender to improve our own lives and the lives of those around us.

As always, the prayers are suggested and it is often more effective to re-word the prayer into your own words, but if all you can do is say the words on paper, try to mean them with your heart.

Prayer of Steps 3 and 7

*God, I offer myself to you—
to build with me and to do with me as
you will.*

*Relieve me of the bondage of self
that I may better do your will.*

*Take away my difficulties, that victory
over them may bear witness to those
I would help of Your Power,
Your Love, and Your Way of life.*

May I do your will always!

*My Creator, I am now willing that you
should have all of me, good and bad.*

*I pray that you now remove from me
every single defect of character which
stands in the way of my usefulness to
you and my fellows.*

*Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to
do your bidding.*

Amen

Step 8

It is time now to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends and restitution. Restitution is defined as “the giving back of something that was taken away.”

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

For Step Eight, we'll give you a guide in order for you to have one last opportunity to be certain that all has been uncovered. Please complete the guide on your own as soon as possible.

Now, please take out your inventory forms, as they are the heart of our Eighth Step amends list. But we also need to ask God to reveal to us any others we have harmed but who are not yet on our list. We'll add their names now as we move on to Step Nine.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

As part of our effort to be thorough, we must define the word “amend,” and according to dictionary.com, we find:

a-mend [uh-mend]

–verb (used with object)

1. *to alter, modify, rephrase, or add to or subtract from (a motion, bill, constitution, etc.) by formal procedure: Congress may amend the proposed tax bill.*
2. *to change for the better; improve: to amend one's ways.*
3. *to remove or correct faults in; rectify.*

–verb (used without object)

4. *to grow or become better by reforming oneself: He amends day by day.*

Focus on Others

We can see that our purpose is not just to relieve ourselves of the guilt and shame from the effects of our past actions, but we are to “alter,” “repair,” “to change for the better; improve,” “to correct fault in; rectify” and “become better.”

Moving into our Ninth Step Amends we step from the self-absorption of the first eight steps to the real world. To this point I admitted, I came to believe, I did an inventory, I shared it, I became willing, I asked to have my defects removed, and I made the list of my harms while active in my alcoholism.

But in Step Nine our goal is to heal the damage we have done.

We hurt real people; I did not just hurt “my mother.” Before she ever had me she was a woman with a life and goals and hopes, and I hurt that woman. That real woman.

Now I review my list and come to see these people as independent from me. What do I do to make it better, to improve, to repair, to set right, the real damage I did to these real people. How do I do this without making it more about “me?”

Some people coming into AA are told they do not have to do amends if it will be difficult, embarrassing, or expensive. Many people follow

that direction and, since they have not done the work required by the Step, soon find themselves drunk again – and very surprised.

“Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be.”

Big Book, page 79

To do The Work means to Do The Work! Not come up with reasons why the one attempting to achieve lasting sobriety is different and can explain their way out of doing that work.

In the Ninth Step, we focus on the one we have hurt. Sometimes this means that we have to pay money, lose the reputation we had built by hiding the truth, or even serve time in prison to make amends for a real crime.

But we become free, without the guilt, shame, and doom that comes from continuing our life hiding the truth. We can walk down the street without fear of being exposed, face the people we meet, and know that we have done what was in our power to right our wrongs.

Into More Action

The amends process is explained as the Big Book tells us what to do next:

“...Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember, it was agreed at

the beginning that we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.”

Big Book, page 88, 89

There are five categories of amends. The following are guide lists with the key suggestions in the Big Book for each type. Read Steps Eight and Nine in the Big Book (pages 76 – 84) before using this guide.

The Big Book divides the amends that we need to make into five types. We’ll list each of the amends that you need to make according to the type. Then, before approaching anyone, reread the advice offered by the Big Book regarding each type. Also, seek counsel from your sponsor, spiritual advisor, or another member of the group that’s gone through the amends process. Finally, pray each morning regarding all the items listed. Now, label each with a plus (+) or a minus (-), depending on your willingness to make the amends — a plus indicating immediate readiness and the minus noting the ones you feel more hesitant about.

Review

- Whom did I hurt?
- What did I do?
- Where was I at fault?
- Where had I been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?
- Did I arouse: Jealousy? Suspicion? Bitterness?
- What Should I have done differently?

Types of Amends

Amend type (a) — People We Hate / Resent

- It may be some have done us more harm than we have done them.
- With a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth.
- It is harder to go to an enemy than a friend, but the benefit is greater.
- Go in a helpful, forgiving spirit.
- Do not criticize or argue.
- We are there to sweep off OUR side of the street.
- Nothing can be accomplished until we do so.

- Discuss your faults, not his or hers.
- Be calm, frank, open.
- It doesn't matter if they accept the apology or throw us out of the office. We've done our part.

Now transfer the names from your resentment and other lists, except for family members. Add any other names that have come to you that you have harmed or owe amends.

Write your list.

Amend type (b) — The People / Institutions / Owed Money

- Most alcoholics owe money.
- We don't dodge anyone.
- In some cases, some of us had to disclose our alcoholism by way of explaining what drove us and what we are now trying to do.
- We do not try to beat anyone out of anything, but we arrange a deal that we can

live up to. Arranging time payments has worked for many of us.

- Let them know you're sorry.
- Drinking made us slow to pay.
- If we fear facing our creditors, we often drink.

Write your list.

Amend type (c) — Incidents of criminal offense

- Some of us padded expense accounts, fell behind on child support, wrote bad checks, and committed other offenses of the law.
- We remind ourselves that we must be willing to go to any lengths to correct these mistakes if we are to stay sober.
- We don't have the power to do this.
- We ask God for strength and direction.
- We don't worry about the consequences. We know God will protect us if we try to do the right thing for a change.
- We may lose position or reputation, though most of us have experienced that already.
- We are willing anyway.
- We must not shrink at anything.

Write your list.

Amend Type (d) — Incidents of Domestic Trouble

- We may have committed adultery.
- After years with a drunk, spouses get worn out, resentful, and uncommunicative.
- We begin to feel self-pity (sorry for ourselves).
- So we look around for another, feeling justified, when WE were really the source of the problem in the first place.
- Sometimes that leads to guilt feelings.
- We have to do something about this.
- If the spouse does not know, we do not always say it is best to tell.
- If she knows something, we admit our fault.
- We have no right to name the names of others involved.
- Keep in mind we are dealing with the most horrible human emotion: jealousy.
- Don't risk more combat over this.
- Some think just being sober in the home now is enough. It isn't.
- We have treated spouses and family in a shocking way.
- We have been like a tornado.
- We broke hearts and uprooted affection, and our selfishness kept the home in turmoil.
- Just saying we are sorry will not do.
- We sit with the family and analyze the past, not criticizing any of them.
- Yes, they may have defects, but many of them were inspired by our behaviors.
- We pray each morning for God to show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness, and love.

Write your list.

Amend Type (e) — Wrongs We Can Never Fully Right

Be very careful about listing anyone or anything here. We only list someone here if we can HONESTLY say that the wrong cannot be righted, usually when to do so would further injure them or another person. We are willing (or pray for the willingness to become willing) to make the amend if we can.

- If the case is that they cannot be seen, we write them an honest letter.

- We don't delay if it can be avoided.
- We do not have to be scrapping, but we do have to be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble.

Discuss the circumstances surrounding the amends with your sponsor or the meeting facilitator before you list anyone here.

Caution Where Others Are Concerned

Sometimes others are involved (spouses, children, other family members). We don't sacrifice them to save ourselves. Before taking drastic action that might affect another, we get their consent, we consult others, and we ask God to help. If the drastic step is still indicated, we move ahead.

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Step 9

Reading for Step Nine

Big Book: Chapter 6, Into Action, from: Page 82, line 17 Thru: Page 84, line 15.

12&12: Step 9

Our experience with Step Nine prompts us to emphasize four ideas about this step.

Token amends will not do! Just what is an amend? Here is what our trusty dictionary says:

a-mend : (uh mend') v. v.t.

2. to change for the better; improve.

3. to remove or correct faults in; rectify.

v.i. <

4. to grow or become better by reforming oneself.

Later in this document you will see an extraction of words and phrases that the authors of the Big Book used to describe what they meant by the word amend. Their true meaning, while including the definition above, is more like the synonyms for the word, rectify:

rectify : v.

1. right, set right, put right, make right, correct, adjust, regulate, straighten, square; focus, attune; mend, amend, emend, fix, repair, revise; remedy, redress, cure, reform.

One might even use the definition of the word, "repair", to express their meaning:

re-pair : [1] (ri pār') -paired, -pair-ing . v.t.

1. to restore to a good or sound condition after decay or damage; mend.

2. to restore or renew.

3. to remedy; make up for; compensate for.

Extracted words and phrases as examples of "amends":

BB = the Big Book of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous

12&12 = Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Self-Correction

...sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will. [BB, page 76, line 22]

...demonstration of good will [BB, page 77, line 13]

...sweep off our side of the street [BB, page 77, line 32]

...sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it. [BB, page 83, line 2]

...We clean house with the family... [BB, page 83, line 7]

...asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. [BB, page 83, line 8]

...The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it... [BB, page 83, line 11]

...Our behavior will convince them more than our words. [BB, page 83, line 15]

...There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. [BB, page 83, line 19]

...Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. [BB, page 83, line 22]

...We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. [BB, page 83, line 25]

Restitution

...repair the damage [we have] done in the past. [BB, page 76, line 21]

...set right the wrong [BB, page 77, line 12]

...straighten out the past [BB, page 77, line 32]

...arranging the best deal... [of repayment] ... we can [BB, page 78, line 21]

...reparations [BB, page 79, line 5]

...sent...money [BB, page 79, line 29]

...willing to go to jail [BB, page 79, line 30]

...make a public statement [BB, page 80, line 15] ... [make]...good to the wife or parents [BB, page 82, line 19]

...reconstruction [BB, page 83, line 1]

Apology

...confessing our former ill feeling [BB, page 77, line 27]

...expressing our regret [BB, page 77, line 27]

...we let these people know we are sorry [BB, page 78, line 21]

...admitting faults [BB, page 79, line 28]

...admit our fault [BB, page 81, line 21]

...asking forgiveness [BB, page 79, line 28]

...A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. [BB, page 83, line 2]

2. Don't rush into amends without guidance. You can mess up yourself and others unless the best judgment is used. When we are new to

sobriety, our judgment is often not so swift. Please read again the words we offered for Step Eight, which is the planning of your amendment step.

3. Your amends must never harm others. Both of the books make clear that we cannot seek atonement at the expense of others. Be especially careful not to implicate or injure other people in your wrong-doing.

4. Don't forget to take the hidden step – forgiveness. You will recall that in Step Four you listed the people who had harmed you as part of your resentment matrix. None of the steps emphasizes sufficiently that the ultimate process of resentment eradication (and they must be wiped out) is forgiveness of those we resent. If you have not yet cleaned up your resentments, finish them off in Step Nine. It then becomes the double-edged sword that cuts you free from all harms done by you and to you.

However, there is a difference between being forgiven and forgiving. Our amends to those we have harmed are made at our own initiative and directly to the person harmed, whenever possible. On the other hand, when we are forgiving others, it is rarely appropriate to approach them to let them know they are forgiven. Why?

They might have no idea that we have resented them. After all, the resentment is ours. Letting them in on our problem cannot do them any good, and may cause them considerable hurt feelings or aggravation – even anger.

We have been learning not to play God and to avoid ego-serving activities. Approaching others to let them know they are forgiven would usually be thought of as self-serving. This we avoid.

If, on the other hand, the injuring party has let us know that they feel guilt about what they have done, it can often be a true act of kindness to let them know they are off the hook as far as we are concerned. We do this with true humility and compassion. We never give the impression that

they owe us something for our act of forgiveness. We then try to treat them the way we want others to forgive us for our own wrongs.

Some of our members believe that the other side of the forgiveness coin, that we are forgiven for our transgressions, is a necessary goal of Step 9. There is no need at all that we be forgiven by the person we have harmed after we make an amend. If they choose to tell us we are forgiven, that is a fine gesture – one we might cherish. However, the real goal here is that you cease to know guilt stemming from your prior acts or omissions. The removal of guilt is the exclusive domain of your spiritual power.

On your way. Your Step 9 can last from several weeks to many years. Start it when you have finished step 8 and are told to do so. Continue until you are done.

Promises of Step Nine

Here are the 20 promises starting at the bottom of page 83 in the Big Book. Some people think these are the only promises the Big Book makes. Little do they realize that each step has a set of promises, and that there are many more besides. There are even a few guarantees. Drop us a line if you have found the 173 promises and guarantees in the Big Book that we have found.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development,

***we will be amazed** before we are half way through.*

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness (will disappear) and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and (we will) gain interest in our fellows.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people (will leave us) and (fear) of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

They will always materialize if we work for them.

Writing: It would be a good idea to update your amendment plan (Step eight) when each amendment is done. Check it off. Make a note as to their reaction. If an agreement was reached concerning further action on your part, write it down. We even know one sponsor who keeps Step 8 lists of his step partners on a computer (on an encrypted file for total privacy). Every month or so, the list is made current.

Spot Check Inventory

Am I...	or Am I?
Into self-pity	Grateful for Blessings
Resentful	Forgiving
Critical	Accepting
Suspicious	Trusting
Tactless and Disrespectful	Loving and Understanding
Narrow-Minded	Open-Minded
Avoiding People	Comfortable with Others
Envious	Aware of my own Worth
Pessimistic	Optimistic
Procrastinating	Prompt
Prone to Gossip	Respectful of Other's Privacy
Self-Centered	Helpful to Others
Impulsive and Self-Indulgent	Self-Disciplined
Selfish	Generous
Self-Righteous and Intolerant	Tolerant
Domineering	Considerate
Arrogant	Humble
Impractical	Realistic
Self-Deceiving	Honest with Myself
Impatient	Patient
Stubborn	Willing to Compromise
Aimless and Indifferent	Purposeful
Dishonest	Truthful

Spirituality

“Having had a spiritual awakening as *the* result of this program...”

From Step 12

The Spiritual Awakening is the ONLY result of the Twelve Step program of recovery. The restoration of health, happiness, belonging, character, and material possessions are reflections of our acceptance of this life-changing gift.

This is the most personal aspect of Recovery. Each member of Recovery has a slightly different personal way of describing it, living it, and sharing it, but they all reflect “THE Result.”

These articles are offered to help achieve and sustain this personal experience and surrender to our Spiritual way of life.

Steps 10 and 11

The steps are structured to provide recognition of our problem (alcoholism and the spiritual poverty that accompanies that disease), and the corrective measures to heal our past as far as humanly possible.

Beyond the humanly possible we turn to our spiritual life as an everyday reality. Whether clothed in the official structure of an established religion, or the method of moral living dictated by another sense of authority, we change our approach to daily life to live on a spiritual basis.

A basic definition of “spiritual” is given elsewhere, but it does no good to do the work of Steps 1 through 9 if we do not proceed to live in “a design for living that really works.”

The articles in this section are intended to help you with your ongoing spiritual growth and not as an indoctrination into an “authorized” spirituality.

When AA began, its members were all Christian. With the publication of the Big Book and the change of wording to allow for “God as you understand God,” or “A Higher Power,” Recovery has been expanded into every known religion and school of moral thought.

Standing with Christians in our meetings we have sober Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, native beliefs, and organized schools on non-belief.

Those who have not settled the question of religion within their alcoholic haze find that they can first focus on the simplicity of not picking up one drink one day at a time and following the direction of the people who arrived before them.

They may jump through the “religion” hoop later, or they may not. They can still remain sober.

Even Atheists and Antitheists stay sober provided they recognize their sobriety as a consequence of a power greater than themselves. For some, this has been the fellowship of AA – the dozens of men and women they encounter who can do what the new person cannot do – stay sober!

It is the purpose of the following section to help expand your Recovery by exercising the steps in your daily practice of spiritual growth and interaction with the people of this world.

Forgiveness – The Missing Step

This is a discussion of forgiveness. First, we point out, as if you didn't already know, that alcoholics tend to feel victimized by people, places, things, and the cosmos in general. As if this were not enough, we alcoholics also carry a grudge about what has been done to us or not done for us.

In the paragraphs that follow, we explore the implications of carrying resentments around with us. If we cannot get rid of our resentments any other way, we are sometimes faced with the ultimate resentment eradication tool – to forgive those whom we resent. The nature of forgiveness is investigated, and finally, techniques to achieve forgiveness are presented. Our discussion of forgiveness is elaborated upon through links into four additional pages below. It is best, we think, that they be viewed in the order listed.

Alcoholics are Resentment –Prone

Most alcoholics have a deep (almost pathological) sense of justice. If we are wronged (meaning often that we did not get what we wanted) or if we even conjure up the notion that we might have been wronged, we find full *justification* to express anger or harbor resentment. It then seems almost a duty to carry a justified resentment. Otherwise, those who have wronged us would get off scot-free. And that wouldn't be right, would it? So, we waste our God-given lives judging and punishing our fellows. Relinquishing a justified resentment is one of the most difficult experiences known to the alcoholic.

If you explore the origins of the resentment word in our dictionary you will find:

Resent has also been used in other senses that seem strange to us, such as “to feel pain” or “to perceive by smell.” The thread that ties the senses together is the notion of feeling or perceiving. Again.

For the alcoholic, resentment is a reliving of the offense that injured us in the first place. Think about it. We perceive that we are punishing that person for their wrong, when in fact, we are simply willing ourselves to feel the hurt again, and again, and again. Get the point? Resenting makes no more sense than our drinking did. Something is twisted in brainsville, we think.

Methods of Resentment Removal

How are resentments removed? Here are the customary methods and they are presented in increasing order of difficulty (to the alcoholic, that is):

Neglect. Yes, benign neglect removes most of our thoughts of the day. We simply forget about things that are not important to us. As we grow in our sobriety we are less interested in harboring resentments and they follow a natural order of elimination, unless they are captured by our perverse habits.

Reflection. If we are aware of our resentment and, if we wish to get rid of it, we are wise to think about it.

Did we really hear what the other person said? Did they really say what they meant? Was what we heard just a rumor? Does the offending action fit a pattern, or might it have been a fluke? Was the offender in distress? Are we giving this person the benefit of the doubt? If not, why are we better off carrying resentment?

Investigation. Maybe we need more substantiation or facts? Is there independent verification of what happened? Have we mentioned to the potentially offending person that we are taken aback by their possible action and we would like to see if we understood correctly? Do the facts substantiate that we were really harmed on purpose? If not, why not just drop the whole thing?

Benefit/Cost Analysis. If there was a real harm, especially an intentional one, what is the benefit to us of carrying resentment? Should it be a big resentment? What should be its ranking among the other justified resentments we already have? Will its insertion into our resentment inventory mean we should discard a resentment of lesser injury? How long should we carry this resentment? Does it justify vengeance? Are we willing to suffer loss of friendship, destruction of property, expense, arrest, or social disfavor as a consequence of being judge, jury, and executioner? Would it simply be nicer to be rid of the resentment?

Forgiveness. Yes, it is possible to be rid of residual resentments through forgiveness. The reference links below will describe how this can be done. Here are a few pointers though:

Anonymity. The person you resent need not know of your resentment. In fact, it is much better and simpler if they do not know. A grudge nurtured in secret is much sweeter anyway.

Privacy. Unless the person whom you resent has asked for your forgiveness or, if you are absolutely certain that they will cherish your forgiveness, you should keep your forgiving private. It can be a gross

form of arrogance to approach another person in order to tell them that they are forgiven. Usually, they will have no idea of having committed an offense and they will wonder who the dickens you think you are forgiving them – God, perhaps?

Finality. Once you have forgiven another person the act is final. It need never be repeated nor should you permit the resentment to recur.

Of course, there is the old standby – prayer. After the discussion of each step in the Big Book, a number of methods to alleviate or remove problems are set forth. The persistent and fundamental tool "suggested" to us is prayer. Prayer should have been in the list above, but we didn't know how to rank it in order of difficulty. For some of us, prayer is the easy and natural tool for straightening out our lives. For others, it is an alien, even hostile, prospect. Whatever one's feeling about prayer might be, there should be steady effort to make it a primary ingredient in consciousness.

What is Forgiveness

The Dictionary on FORGIVE

for-give (*fuhr giv'*) *v.* <-gave, -giv-en, -giv-ing>

1. to grant pardon for or remission of (an offense, sin, etc.); absolve.
2. to cancel or remit (a debt, obligation, etc.): to forgive the interest owed on a loan.
3. to grant pardon to (a person).
4. to cease to feel resentment against: to forgive one's enemies.
5. to pardon an offense or an offender.

Who is the Keeper of Our Wrongs

There may be a bit of our personal theology here. If yours is different, please don't be offended. You might just be right.

When we commit an offense (or fail to fulfill an obligation), the wrong is recorded. The party(s) we have offended, if any, might keep score – most

people do. We also add to the bag of guilt, shame, remorse, and self-loathing that we haul around with us.

But the real recorder has been built into the system of the universe by its Creator. It is automatic and inevitable that all wrongs are recorded and the one and only thing that can remove them is amendment (correction or repair) of the wrong. Period.

In the East, they call this system Karma. In metaphysics, they might call it the Akasha. Whatever it is called and wherever it is located (most likely within us), it works, and it always works without fail, especially for we alcoholics, it seems (joke).

Objectives of Forgiveness

Just who is being forgiven, and by whom?

Forgiving others. If an act of courtesy on our part will help others feel better about themselves, then perhaps we should let them know we have no negative feelings about their actions. But we should never believe that we can, in fact, interfere in their being forgiven in accordance with God's plan for them. Our beliefs and actions are not part of that plan.

Being forgiven by others. The same logic applies as with forgiving others. Cosmetic forgiveness between humans can be a compassionate act. However, genuine forgiveness is a very personal matter.

Being forgiven by God. God does not keep records nor does He carry grudges. The universal system of justice He has created takes care of correction and forgiveness automatically. He does not intervene. He simply loves us all the time.

Forgiving ourselves

Just as humans cannot truly forgive each other, self-forgiveness is not possible, either. However, there is more to be said here. We assuredly agree that many, if not most, alcoholics know guilt, shame, remorse,

and self-loathing to excess. We **MUST** be rid of these before we can truly see the perfection of the Creator within ourselves as we are intended to do. We must also be enabled to look into the mirror and smile at the creature emerging from the slime of self-centered assertion into the service of the Father through his fellows. Knowing that we are forgiven is a requirement for the sober life.

The first thing to do is to clear away the false crimes of which we have convicted ourselves. A solid Step Five will produce a list of our defects of character and a preliminary list of persons we have harmed. If we feel bad about ourselves for anything not on these lists, the lists are either incomplete or we are caught up in the defect of senseless self-condemnation. Feeling bad about oneself, which might have been justified when we were doing our damage, is often an emotional hangover that needs to be discarded. You can create a self-respect (not pride) list. It might be next to the mirror and it might say, "I have cause to respect myself today because I have ... (list of good deeds, steps taken, persons helped, prayers, etc.)." But, be sure never to put yourself on your Step Eight list.

The second thing to do is to take Step Nine (after one thorough Step Eight with your sponsor, of course). Why? Because an amend is the **only** means of gaining forgiveness.

Our "Right" to Forgive

We feel that when a wrong is committed there is an immediate creation of a record of the act. This record cannot be prevented NOR can it be eradicated through forgiveness. The injured party cannot remove the record, and God will not do so either, because He created the system of records in the first place. It works just fine for Him.

So, how are you and others absolved from our wrongs? You guessed it. Step Nine. Amendment (repair/correction) of the offense removes the record

automatically. Forgiveness plays no part whatsoever in absolution.

Why all this talk about forgiveness then? The fact is that we are not forgiving offenses against ourselves in the sense of removing the need for amendment on the part of the offender. That we cannot do. Only amendment can do that. Our act of forgiving is to clean out ourselves. That's right. We remove from ourselves the curse we have imposed upon ourselves to punish the offender. Our forgiveness absolves not their act but removes our own personal reaction to it.

Wow, what a concept! It is not their karma we correct, but our own!

Here are some additional sources we have found genuinely helpful. You might notice that some of them don't agree completely with what we have said. That doesn't make them, or us, wrong. It does make it necessary for you to dwell deeply upon your own convictions.

The Big Book on Forgiveness

Our Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) has a great deal to say about resentments and forgiveness. Enjoy.

Harboring Resentments is Fatal

We are reluctant to repeat the book.

However, some of the points it makes cannot be left without comment: If we were to read page 66 again, we would note the power of resentment far exceeds any conception we had of negative thinking. Were you aware that:

*...a life which includes deep resentment leads
only to futility and unhappiness.*

The hours in which we allow futility and unhappiness in our lives are not worthwhile. Resentments waste our lives.

Resentments shut us off from the sunlight of the Spirit, thereby preventing the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience.

When shadowed from the sunlight of the Spirit, the insanity of alcohol returns, we drink again, and we die.

Harboring of resentments is fatal.

Yet, it must be done! There is striking evidence that resentment creates a physical poison in our bodies in addition to the mental and spiritual maladies it feeds.

Eradicating Resentments

How do we rid ourselves of resentments? Hopefully, this process began in step Four. Our list holds the key.

Note the message of the column headings in our inventory:

Column #1) **Who** do you hold a grudge against?

Column #2) **What** did they do that you found offensive?

Column #3) **How** did you contribute to their action? (what is *your* part?) and

Column #4) **Why** did you react with a resentment?

The first lesson is that resentments cannot be cleared up until we know we have them and why. The second lesson is that we have made ourselves vulnerable to the outside world to an extraordinary extent. Our entire self-concept has been molded by the opinions and actions of others, and our old thinking as to what we ought to be and were.

Next, it is necessary to be willing to let go of the resentment. You will learn more about this in Step Six. Moreover (and the Big Book doesn't give as much help here as it might), we must forgive the person we resent. There will be more discussion of forgiving others in Step Eight. Just accept right now that you are going to have to do it! There is no other course.

The ultimate key given you in the Big Book is the oft repeated notion that your life is now on a different basis. A basis is a foundation – that upon which all the rest stands. Your new basis is trusting and relying upon God.

The Art of Forgiveness

Reprinted from the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and the 12th & 12

We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one. Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's.

[Big Book, page 67, line 11]

If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.

[Big Book, page 70, line 8]

The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he had done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.

Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue.

[Big Book, page 77, line 18]

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflections, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

[Big Book, page 86, line 5]

Step Five

This vital Step was also the means by which we began to get the feeling that we could be forgiven, no matter what we had thought or done. Often it was while working on this Step with our sponsors or spiritual advisers that we first felt truly able to forgive others, no matter how deeply we felt they had wronged us. Our moral inventory had persuaded us that all-round forgiveness was desirable, but it was only when we resolutely tackled Step Five that we inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too.

[12th & 12, page 57]

These obstacles, however, are very real. The first, and one of the most difficult, has to do with forgiveness. The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive. To escape looking at the wrongs we have done another, we resentfully focus on the wrong he has done us. This is especially true if he

has, in fact, behaved badly at all. Triumphantly we seize upon his misbehavior as the perfect excuse for minimizing or forgetting our own.

Right here we need to fetch ourselves up sharply. It doesn't make much sense when a real tosspot calls a kettle black. Let's remember that alcoholics are not the only ones bedeviled by sick emotions. Moreover, it is usually a fact that our behavior when drinking has aggravated the defects of others. We've repeatedly strained the patience of our best friends to a snapping point, and have brought out the very worst in those who didn't think much of us to begin with. In many instances we are really dealing with fellow sufferers, people whose woes we have increased. If we are now about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?

[12 & 12, page 78]

Step Eight

We shall want to hold ourselves to the course of admitting the things we have done, meanwhile forgiving the wrongs done us, real or fancied. We should avoid extreme judgments, both of ourselves and of others involved. We must not exaggerate our defects or theirs. A quiet, objective view will be our steadfast aim. . [12 & 12, page 81] In all these situations we need self-restraint, honest analysis of what is involved, a willingness to admit when the fault is ours, and an equal willingness to forgive when the fault is elsewhere. . [12 & 12, page 91] ...that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness ... It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.

[12 & 12, page 99]

Then he asked for the grace to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope,

light, and joy to every human being he could.

[12 & 12, page 101]

He thought it better to give comfort than to receive it; better to understand than to be understood; better to forgive than to be forgiven. .

[12 & 12, page 101]

At last, acceptance proved to be the key to my drinking problem. After I had been around AA for seven months, tapering off alcohol and pills, not finding the program working very well, I was finally able to say, "Okay, God. It is true that I--of all people, strange as it may seem, and even though I didn't give my permission--really, really am an alcoholic of sorts. And it's all right with me. Now, what am I going to do about it?" When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer, the problem went away. From that moment on, I have not had a single compulsion to drink.

And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation--some fact of my life -- unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until] I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes. .

[Big Book, page 448]

One morning, however, I realized I had to get rid of it, for my reprieve was running out, and if I didn't get rid of it I was going to get drunk--and I didn't want to get drunk any more. In my prayers that morning I

asked God to point out to me some way to be free of this resentment. During the day a friend of mine brought me some magazines to take to a hospital group I was interested in, and I looked through them and a "banner" across the front of one featured an article by a prominent clergyman in which I caught the word resentment

He said, in effect: "If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don't really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don't mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love."

It worked for me then, and it has worked for me many times since, and it will work for me every time I am willing to work it. Sometimes I have to ask first for the willingness, but it too always comes. Because it works for me, it will work for all of us. As another great man says, "The only real freedom a human being can ever know is doing what you ought to do because you want to do it."

This great experience that released me from the bondage of hatred and replaced it with love is really just another affirmation of the truth I know: I get everything I need in Alcoholics Anonymous everything I need I get--and when I get what I need I invariably find that it was just what I wanted all the time. .

[Big Book, page 552]

How to Forgive: Ten Guidelines

By Victor M. Parachin *

As poet Edwin Markham approached his retirement years, he discovered that the man to whom he had entrusted his financial portfolio had squandered all the money. Markham's dream of a comfortable retirement vanished. He began to brood over the injustice and the loss. His anger deepened. Over time, Markham's bitterness grew by leaps and bounds. One day while sitting at his table, Markham found himself drawing circles as he tried to soothe the turmoil he felt within. Finally, he concluded: "I must forgive him, and I will forgive him." Looking again at the circles he had drawn on the paper before him, Markham wrote these lines:

*He drew a circle to shut me out, Heretic, rebel,
a thing to flout;*

But love and I had the wit to win,

We drew a circle to take him in.

Although Markham wrote hundreds of poems contained in many book volumes, the words he wrote while forgiving are his most popular and memorable. As he forgave, a tremendous act of creativity was released within Markham. The poets and mystics among us have long known and declared that the act of forgiveness releases great healing power.

Author and Minister Charles Fillmore recommended forgiveness as the most effective way of restoring inner harmony and balance: "There is a mental treatment guaranteed to cure

every ill that flesh is heir to: Sit for half an hour every night and forgive everyone against whom you have any ill will or antipathy," he wrote.

While forgiveness has always been an important concept in religion and ethics, only recently have psychologists begun to discover its powers as a psychotherapeutic tool. In three separate studies, people who had not resolved the wrongs done to them (college students, elderly women, and incest survivors) all improved when therapists helped them learn to forgive. Although an increasing number of counselors recommend that we forgive those who have hurt us, many people find forgiveness difficult to offer. Here are ten guidelines to help extend forgiveness and ease resentment.

Educate Yourself about Forgiveness

"Forgive," according to Webster's New World Dictionary, means: "to give up resentment against or the desire to punish; pardon; to overlook an offense; to cancel a debt." Thus, the goal of forgiveness is to let go of a hurt and move ahead with life. Visit a library and research books or magazine articles on forgiveness so that you understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy forgiveness. For example, Robert Enright, Ph.D., an education psychologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, stresses that true forgiveness is not:

Forgetting. If the hurt wounded you enough to require forgiveness, you may always have a memory of it.

Excusing or condoning. The wrong should not be denied, minimized, or justified.

Reconciling. You can forgive the offender and still choose not to reestablish the relationship.

Weakness. You do not become a doormat or oblivious to cruelty.

Spend a Few Minutes Each Day Cleaning Your Thinking

At a local florist shop, I once watched the owner remove tiny bugs from a potted plant. Using a cotton swab he meticulously plucked off one small tenaciously clinging offender after another. Although that tedious process took him several hours of silent concentration and steady work, he was able to rid the plant of what would ultimately stunt its growth and ruin its loveliness. There is a lesson from that florist which applies to daily living. The only way to keep ourselves free from the infestation of troublesome thoughts is to spend a few minutes each day cleaning out our thinking.

Has someone hurt you by his or her comments? Were you publicly insulted by someone? Did a friend fail to come through for you? Pluck off each offending layer of thought and dispose of it just as the florist disposed of the tiny insects destroying his lovely plant. Doing so insures that a vague irritation does not transform itself into a deep resentment and an intense hatred.

Practice on Small Hurts

To become a generous forgiver of major pains, practice forgiveness on small hurts. Forgive immediately the small slights inflicted by strangers – a rude clerk, a driver who cut you off, a doctor who keeps you waiting and waiting, etc. Use those events as practice time to prepare you for the tougher task of forgiving major hurts.

Challenge the "Shoulds" in Your Thinking

Forgiveness is much easier when you give up the irrational belief that fuels your frustration, anger, and hostility – the expectation that other people will always act in the way you want. Beware of the "shoulds" in your thinking and speaking:

He shouldn't have done this to me.

She shouldn't act that way.

My daughter should have known better.

My son should be more attentive to me.

I've worked hard and I should have been rewarded.

Whenever you find the word "should" in your mind and talk, challenge yourself. Tell yourself it is unrealistic to expect that people will always act decently and respectfully toward you. Remind yourself that everyone is fallible and capable of making a mistake.

Understand That Resentment has a High Price Tag

"Holding a grudge takes mental, emotional, and physical energy. It makes you obsessive, angry, and depressed," observes Barry Lubetkin, a psychologist and director of the Institute for Behavior Therapy in New York City. "There's a strong connection between anger and a wide spectrum of health miseries – chronic stomach upset, heart problems, and skin conditions among them. Without question, the more anger we experience within, the more stress we're under," he adds. Whenever a hostile or hateful thought enters your mind, try to be fully aware of the harm that resentment can do to you, even making you ill. Let that knowledge further motivate you to forgive and let go.

Remember: Lack of Forgiveness is Giving Others Power over You.

Withholding forgiveness and nursing resentment simply allow another person to have control over your well-being. It is always a mistake to let such negative emotions influence your living. Forgive, and you will be able to direct your life in positive thoughts and actions. An excellent example is that of educator Booker T. Washington (1856-1915). An emancipated slave who started out living in abject poverty; he had to work from the age of nine to help support his family. Instead of becoming bitter about the hardships he faced and viewing himself as a victim, Washington worked hard to improve his situation. He first became a janitor in a school to obtain his education. Then he went on to teach at Hampton Institute, one of the first African-American colleges in the U.S. Later he organized and became president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. "I shall allow no man to belittle my soul by making me hate him," was Washington's lifelong motto.

Recognize the Ripple Effect of Harboring a Grudge

When you can't forgive someone, there can be a ripple effect which negatively infects your family and friends. Writing to advice columnist "Dear Abby," a woman says: "I have something to say to the millions of families whose lives are affected by divorce. An unforgiving and bitter person who has not let go of animosities can poison an entire family and ruin the holidays for everyone. I know. I was that person." The writer, who signs herself as "Free in Vermont," explains she could not forgive her former husband and his new wife, and her children suffered her ensuing bitterness. "One day after a particularly harsh outburst, I understood the pained reaction on my children's faces. I prayed for the strength to change my ways so that I could stop hurting those I love most in the world." Although it was difficult for "Free in

Vermont" to extend forgiveness, she did so and says:

"I have peace in my heart and my children are happy. They are free to enjoy both homes." Forgiveness is a priceless gift which you can give to yourself and your family.

Bury the Grudge – Literally

Write a letter to the person who hurt you but don't mail it. Express fully, clearly, honestly, how you feel and why that person's act hurt you and made you angry. Conclude with the bold declaration that you have forgiven him or her. Then, bury the letter in a potted plant or somewhere in your yard. This is a powerful symbolic exercise that many people have found to be extremely therapeutic.

Try Instant Forgiveness

Lewis Smedes, a professor of ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, and author of *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*, tells of his rage toward a police officer who brutalized his young son, John. The officer was a large 250-pound lawman who assaulted his 140-pound son and then charged him with resisting an officer. Although the charge was quickly dismissed, Smedes's rage and hostility were not so quickly appeased. Realizing that his intense feelings toward the police officer were creating a personal emotional crisis, Smedes knew he had to find a way of forgiving.

"I tried a technique that everything in my temperament resisted," he writes. "I thought about how a priest gives instant absolution to a penitent, right off the bat, in the confessional booth. And I decided to give this cop absolution. 'In the name of God I hereby forgive you—go in peace,' I said out loud, at least six times. It worked enough to get me going. I felt myself pried a couple of inches off my hate. And I was on my way."

Recall Repeatedly This One Vital Fact

Forgiveness is a Gift You Give Yourself

A former inmate of a Nazi concentration camp was visiting a friend who shared the ordeal with him.

"Have you forgiven the Nazis?" he asked his friend.

"Yes."

"Well, I haven't. I'm still consumed with hatred for them," the other man declared.

"In that case," said his friend gently, "they still have you in prison."

That story points out this reality: ultimately, forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. Bitterness and anger imprison you emotionally. Forgiveness sets you free.

*About this article. We first encountered Victor's fine guidance in Venture Inward, May/June 1999, the Magazine of the Association for Research and Enlightenment of the Edgar Cayce Foundation. Victor Parachin, an ordained

minister and writer living in Claremont, California, is the author of 365 Good Reasons to Be a Vegetarian.

On May 20th, 1999 we asked Victor if we might post his wisdom here. He was kind enough to permit his words to be posted because he hoped that they might be of help to additional people. Victor, your practical guidance is just what we need!

We have no knowledge of the extent to which Victor is familiar with AA. Because he is a minister, though, we assume he has seen families ravaged by alcoholism. His words have the same truth and practicality we have heard in our Big Book and meetings. AA is blessed with its wonderful friends, even when they might be so only in spirit.

This notebook then asked permission for sober.org to include materials in this volume, crediting the article back to them. We appreciate their cooperation.

Lord's Prayer & Forgiveness

by Rocco A. Errico

Free Us from Our Offenses

WASHBOKLAN KHOBEN: AICANNA DOP KHANAN SHBAKN LKHAYAVEN means "Forgive us our offenses, as we have forgiven our offenders." A literal translation would read: "Free us [from] our offenses as also we have freed our offenders." The word KHOBEN used here means something more than just "debts," as it has been translated in other translations of the Bible. It also means "faults," "mistakes," or "offenses." The word SHBAKN, which has been translated as "forgive," also means "to free," "to untie," "to loosen," or "to release."

Forgiveness Frees Us

Forgiveness frees us from past errors which we have committed, or which have been committed against us, and enables us to start on a new path of life. Genuine forgiveness heals any hurts or wrongs. It strengthens the disheartened soul which has lost its way. It refreshes and renews our hope. It is through forgiveness that we are "born again" and "become like a child." In this way we regain the precious attitude of a willing mind which is ready to learn all over again.

Nature Doesn't Condemn

Jesus was a strong advocate of forgiveness. This is one of the important teachings that make his Gospel so appealing and so powerful. He knew, through his own experiences of life and through his study of the Scriptures, that Nature does not

blame nor "point its finger" when things go wrong. Nature always endeavors to heal or correct an injury or hurt. For example, when I cut my finger, the life forces in my body immediately rush to the aid of the injured area to fight off infection and to start the coagulation of blood to prevent excessive bleeding. The body doesn't attempt to seek out the one who did the damage. Its only interest is to repair the wound. Jesus knew that God is a loving, forgiving Father Who cares for His children. He also knew that forgiveness is the beginning of the rectification of all human mistakes. Blaming doesn't heal anything, but forgiveness does. Our Lord, understanding mankind as he did, made room for human weaknesses and faults, and stressed the need for practicing forgiveness. He knew that forgiveness would restore broken human relationships.

A Two-Way Street

"And free us from our offenses." How we all love this part of the prayer, for we all long to be free of the guilt which accompanies past offenses. But there's a catch to it: "as also we have freed our offenders." How often we seem to overlook this important part! We all want to be freed from our offenses. We also want other people to put up with our shortcomings. But how well do we put up with their shortcomings? In other words, through these words of the prayer we are asking: "Let me experience the same freedom from my offenses as I have allowed others to experience." Let us stop

and think about that for a moment. How many times I have heard people say, "I forgive him," and then a few minutes later they start talking about him again. They haven't released the offense. They're still holding onto it!

When we hold grudges and allow them to build up in our minds, we suffer mentally and physically. We often become unbearable to live with. When we don't forgive others, how can we expect forgiveness to be extended to us? If we become difficult and unforgiving toward others, they will treat us likewise. It is impossible to escape the law of reaping what we have sown. We find that what we really think of ourselves, deep within, is felt by others and reflected back to us as their "impression" of us. It is essential, for our sake and theirs, that we learn to forgive others, and to forgive ourselves as well. It is also interesting to realize that we always keep the "original copy" of whatever we send out to others, be it hate and resentment, or love and forgiveness.

"Wise as Serpents"

This does not mean, however, that we should not be careful of certain people who are determined to do evil. Jesus told his disciples to be "wise as serpents" (See Matthew 10:16). He used this example because he had observed that when a serpent sees trouble coming it gets out of the way; it wants to avoid being stepped on. We should also do this! When we see trouble coming, we should get out of its way; side-step it.

Thus, be wise when you know a person does evil and wishes to hurt. You can forgive him, but stay out of his way lest you get "stepped on." Therefore, be "wise as serpents."

"Pure as Doves"

In the passage just mentioned, Jesus also told his disciples to be "pure as doves." Doves love to go where people are gentle, where people are good. They love to sit on the shoulder of a meek

man. They make their nests in certain homes because they know they will not be mistreated there. They sense it, and the people love to have them nearby.

There's a reference to this phenomenon in the Song of Solomon 2:12:

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of pruning has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land;

In most English translations, "turtle dove" has been wrongly translated as "turtle." This is very misleading, since the "voice" of the turtle cannot be heard. The voice of the turtle dove, however, is a joy to all; hearing it means the doves have built a nest nearby and there is tranquility and peace. When people are upset and there is quarreling in the homes, the doves leave. They become frightened at the vibrations they feel from the trouble in the homes, but when they stay it is a sign of peace and harmony.

If we are to be "pure as doves," then we must have a forgiving but wise heart. We shouldn't remain where there is constant strife or where there are troublemakers. We must be at peace with all and avoid trouble whenever possible.

Self-Forgiveness, Too

But there is something more to consider about forgiveness. Jesus was teaching us here that our own forgiveness comes to us through the act of practicing forgiveness. If we don't forgive others, it's hard for us to forgive ourselves. People who refuse to forgive others usually won't forgive themselves either. But when a person releases others he usually will not hold a grudge against himself.

"Pure in Heart"

These words of the prayer help us to tune in to the needs of others and to our own needs. They help us to clear our minds of hatred and resentment so we may again commune with one

another and with our Father. They help us to purify our minds, for, as Jesus said,

"Blessed are the pure in heart [those who have a clear mind and conscience], for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

The Sixth Attunement

Forgiveness revitalizes our souls and releases the inner tensions and bondages which plague our minds. This attunement would not be complete without the powerful act of forgiveness for

ourselves and for others. This is the sixth attunement.

Rocco Errico, The Reprinted from "the Ancient Aramaic Prayer of Jesus, the Lord's Prayer", by Rocco A. Errico.

[This book has been revised and expanded under a new title, Setting a Trap for God, The Aramaic Prayer of Jesus (ISBN 0-87159-124-3). Copies may be ordered from Unity Press (800) 669-0282. Our quotation is from the original book.]

Forgiveness

Reprinted from The Sermon On the Mount, by Emmet Fox

“Forgive Us Our Trespasses, as We Forgive Them that Trespass Against Us”

This clause is the turning point of the Prayer. It is the strategic key to the whole Recovery. Let us notice here that Jesus has so arranged this marvelous Prayer that it covers the entire ground of the enfoldment of our souls completely, and in the most concise and telling way. It omits nothing that is essential for our salvation, and yet, so compact is it that there is not a thought or a word too much. Every idea fits into its place with perfect harmony and in perfect sequence. Anything more would be redundant; anything less would be incompleteness, and at this point, it takes up the critical factor of forgiveness.

Having told us what God is, what man is, how the universe works, how we are to do our own work (the salvation of humanity and of our own souls), he then explains what our true nourishment or supply is, and the way in which we can obtain it. Now, he comes to the forgiveness of sins.

The forgiveness of sins is the central problem of life. Sin is a sense of separation from God and is the major tragedy of human experience. It is, of course, rooted in selfishness. It is essentially an attempt to gain some supposed good to which we are not entitled in justice. It is a sense of isolated, self-regarding, personal existence, whereas the Truth of Being is that all are One. Our true selves

are at one with God, undivided from Him, expressing His ideas, witnessing to His nature – the dynamic Thinking of that Mind. Because we are all one with the great Whole of which we are spiritually a part, it follows that we are one with all men. Just because in Him we live and move and have our being, we are, in the absolute sense, all essentially one.

Evil, sin, the fall of man, in fact, are essentially the attempt to negate this Truth in our thoughts. We try to live apart from God. We try to do without Him. We act as though we had a life of our own, as separate minds, as though we could have plans, purposes, and interests separate from His. All this, if it were true, would mean that existence is not one and harmonious, but a chaos of competition and strife. It would mean that we are quite separate from our fellow man and could injure him, rob him, or hurt him, or even destroy him, without any damage to ourselves. In fact, that the more we took from other people the more we should have for ourselves. It would mean that the more we considered our own interests, and the more indifferent we were to the welfare of others, the better off we should be. Of course it would then follow naturally that it would pay others to treat us in the same way, and that accordingly we might expect many of them to do so. Now if this were true, it would mean that the whole universe is only a jungle; that sooner or later it must destroy itself by its own inherent weakness and

anarchy. But, of course, it is not true and therein lays the joy of life.

Undoubtedly, many people do act as though they believed it to be true, and a great many more who would be dreadfully shocked if brought face to face with that proposition in cold blood, have nevertheless, a vague feeling that such must be very much the way things are even though they, themselves, are personally above consciously acting in accordance with such a notion. Now, this is the real basis of sin, of resentment, of condemnation, of jealousy, of remorse, and all the evil brood that walk that path.

This belief in independent and separate existence is the arch sin, and now, before we can progress any further, we have to take the knife to this evil thing and cut it out once and for all. Jesus knew this, and with this definite end in view, he inserted at this critical point a carefully prepared statement that would encompass our end and his, without the shadow of a possibility of miscarrying. He inserted what is nothing less than a trip clause. He drafted a declaration that would force us, without any conceivable possibility of escape, evasion, mental reservation, or subterfuge of any kind, to execute the great sacrament of forgiveness in all its fullness and far-reaching power.

As we repeat the Great Prayer intelligently, considering and meaning what we say, we are suddenly, so to speak, caught up off our feet and grasped as though in a vise, so that we must face this problem – and there is no escape. We must positively and definitely extend forgiveness to everyone to whom it is possible that we can owe forgiveness, namely, to anyone that we think can have injured us in any way. Jesus leaves no room for any possible glossing of this fundamental thing. He has constructed his Prayer with more skill than ever yet lawyer displayed in the casting of a deed. He has so contrived it that once our attention has been drawn to this matter, we are inevitably obliged either to forgive our enemies in

sincerity and truth, or never again to repeat that prayer. It is safe to say that no one who reads this booklet with understanding will ever again be able to use the Lord's Prayer unless and until he has forgiven. Should you now attempt to repeat it without forgiving, it can safely be predicted that you will not be able to finish it. This great central clause will stick in your throat.

Notice that Jesus does not say, "forgive me my trespasses and I will try to forgive others," or "I will see if it can be done," or "I will forgive generally, with certain exceptions." He obliges us to declare that we have actually forgiven, and forgiven all; and he makes our claim to our own forgiveness to depend upon that. Who is there that has grace enough to say his prayers at all, who does not long for the forgiveness or cancellation of his own mistakes and faults? Who would be so insane as to endeavor to seek the Kingdom of God without desiring to be relieved of his own sense of guilt? No one, we may believe. So, we see that we are trapped in the inescapable position that we cannot demand our own release before we have released our brother.

The forgiveness of others is the vestibule of Heaven, and Jesus knew it, and has led us to the door. You must forgive everyone who has ever hurt you if you want to be forgiven yourself; that is the long and the short of it. You have to get rid of all resentment and condemnation of others, and not least, of self-condemnation and remorse. You have to forgive others and, having discontinued your own mistakes, you have to accept the forgiveness of God for them too, or you cannot make any progress. You have to forgive yourself, but you cannot forgive yourself sincerely until you have forgiven others first. Having forgiven others, you must be prepared to forgive yourself too. To refuse to forgive oneself is only spiritual pride. "And by that sin fell the angels." We cannot make this point too clear to ourselves; we have got to forgive. There are few people in the world who

have not at some time or another been hurt, really hurt, by someone else, or been disappointed, or injured, or deceived, or misled. Such things sink into the memory where they usually cause inflamed and festering wounds, and there is only one remedy – they have to be plucked out and thrown away. The one and only way to do that is by forgiveness.

Of course, nothing in the entire world is easier than to forgive than people who have not hurt us very much. Nothing is easier than to rise above than the thought of a trifling loss. Anybody will be willing to do this but what the Law of Being requires of us is that we forgive not only these trifles, but also the very things that are so hard to forgive that at first it seems impossible to do it at all. The despairing heart cries, "It is too much to ask. That thing meant too much to me. It is impossible. I cannot forgive it." But the Lord's Prayer makes our own forgiveness from God, which means our escape from guilt and limitation, dependent upon just this very thing. There is no escape from this, and so forgiveness there must be, no matter how deeply we may have been injured, or how terribly we have suffered. It must be done.

If your prayers are not being answered, search your consciousness and see if there is not someone whom you have yet to forgive. Find out if there is not some old thing about which you are very resentful. Search and see if you are not really holding a grudge (it may be camouflaged in some self-righteous way) against some individual, or some body of people, a nation, a race, a social class, some religious movement of which you disapprove perhaps, a political party, or what-not. If you are doing so, then you have an act of forgiveness to perform, and when this is done, you will probably take your action. If you cannot forgive at present, you will have to wait for your demonstration until you can. You will have to postpone finishing your recital of the Lord's

Prayer, as well, or involve yourself in the position that you do not desire the forgiveness of God.

Setting others free means setting yourself free because resentment is really a form of attachment. It is a Cosmic Truth that it takes two to make a prisoner; the prisoner – and a jailer. There is no such thing as being a prisoner on one's own account. Every prisoner must have a gaoler, and the gaoler is as much a prisoner as his charge. When you hold resentment against anyone, you are bound to that person by a cosmic link, a real, though mental chain. You are tied by a cosmic tie to the thing that you hate. The one person perhaps in the whole world whom you most dislike is the very one to whom you are attaching yourself by a hook that is stronger than steel. Is this what you wish? Is this the condition in which you desire to go on living? Remember, you belong to the thing with which you are linked in thought. At some time or other, if that tie endures, the object of your resentment will be drawn again into your life, perhaps to work further havoc. Do you think that you can afford this? Of course, no one can afford such a thing and so the way is clear. You must cut all such ties by a clear and spiritual act of forgiveness. You must loose him and let him go. By forgiveness you set yourself free; you save your soul. Because the law of love works alike for one and all, you also help to save his soul, making it so much easier for him to become what he ought to be.

But how, in the name of all that is wise and good, is the magic act of forgiveness to be accomplished, when we have been so deeply injured that, though we have long wished with all our hearts that we could forgive, we have nevertheless found it impossible; when we have tried and tried to forgive, but have found the task beyond us.

The technique of forgiveness is simple enough, and not very difficult to manage when you understand how. The only thing that is essential is

willingness to forgive. Provided you desire to forgive the offender, the greater part of the work is already done. People have always made such a misunderstanding of forgiveness because they have been under the erroneous impression that to forgive a person means that you have to compel yourself to like him. Happily this is by no means the case – we are not called upon to like anyone whom we do not find ourselves liking spontaneously, and indeed, it is quite impossible to like people to order. You can no more like people to order than you can hold the winds in your fist. If you endeavor to coerce yourself into doing so, you will finish by disliking or hating the offender more than ever. People used to think that when someone had hurt them very much, it was their duty, as good Christians, to pump up, as it were, a feeling of liking for him. Since such a thing is utterly impossible, they suffered a great deal of distress, and ended, necessarily, with failure and a resulting sense of sinfulness. We are not obliged to like anyone, but we are under a binding obligation to love everyone. Love, or charity as the Bible calls it, meaning a vivid sense of impersonal good will. This has nothing directly to do with the feelings. It is always followed, sooner or later, by a wonderful feeling of peace and happiness.

The method of forgiving is this: Get by yourself and become quiet. Repeat any prayer or treatment that appeals to you, or read a chapter of the Bible. Then quietly say, "I fully and freely forgive X (mentioning the name of the offender); I loose him and let him go. I completely forgive the whole business in question. As far as I am concerned, it is finished forever. I cast the burden of resentment upon the Christ within me. He is free now, and I am free too. I wish him well in every phase of his life. That incident is finished. The Christ Truth has

set us both free. I thank God." Then get up and go about your business. On no account repeat this act of forgiveness, because you have done it once and for all, and to do it a second time would be tacitly to repudiate your own work. Afterward, whenever the memory of the offender or the offense happens to come into your mind, bless the delinquent briefly and dismiss the thought. Do this however many times the thought may come back. After a few days it will return less and less often, until you forget it altogether. Then, perhaps after an interval, shorter or longer, the old trouble may come back to memory once more. You will find that now all bitterness and resentment have disappeared and you are both free with the perfect freedom of the children of God. Your forgiveness is complete. You will experience a wonderful joy in the realization of the demonstration.

Everybody should practice general forgiveness every day as a matter of course. When you say your daily prayers, issue a general amnesty, forgiving everyone who may have injured you in any way, and on no account particularize. Simply say: "I freely forgive everyone." Then, in the course of the day, should the thought of grievance or resentment come up, bless the offender briefly, and dismiss the thought.

The result of this policy will be that very soon you will find yourself cleared of all resentment and condemnation and the effect upon your happiness, your bodily health, and your general life will be nothing less than revolutionary.

Parable of the Prodigal Son

As Seen Through Christianity and Buddhism

Most of you know the Parable of the Prodigal Son as it appears in Luke's gospel, but probably few are aware that it has a Buddhist parallel in one of the major writings of Mahayana Buddhism. Although both parables seem to convey a similar message regarding God's compassion for humans, a closer look will reveal fundamental differences in their teaching and consequently, between Christianity and Buddhism. Let us quote both parables and then analyze them.

First, here is the text in the Gospel According to Luke:

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there, squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men." So he got up and went to his father. But after a while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son,

threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. "Your brother has come," he replied, "and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound." The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" "My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:11-32)

The Buddhist parable is longer:

A young man left his father and ran away. For long he dwelt in other countries, for ten, or twenty, or fifty years. The older he grew, the needier he became. Wandering in all directions to seek clothing and food, he unexpectedly

approached his native country. The father had searched for his son all those years in vain and meanwhile had settled in a certain city. His home became very rich; his goods and treasures were fabulous.

At this time, the poor son, wandering through village after village and passing through countries and cities, at last reached the city where his father had settled. The father had always been thinking of his son, yet, although he had been parted from him over fifty years, he had never spoken of the matter to anyone. He only pondered over it within himself and cherished regret in his heart, saying, "Old and worn out I am. Although I own much wealth – gold, silver, and jewels, granaries and treasures overflowing – I have no son. Someday my end will come and my wealth will be scattered and lost, for I have no heir. If I could only get back my son and commit my wealth to him, how contented and happy would I be, with no further anxiety!"

Meanwhile the poor son, hired for wages here and there, unexpectedly arrived at his father's house. Standing by the gate, he saw from a distance his father seated on a lion-couch, his feet on a jeweled footstool, and with expensive strings of pearls adorning his body, revered and surrounded by priests, warriors, and citizens, attendants and young slaves waiting upon him right and left. The poor son, seeing his father having such great power, was seized with fear, regretting that he had come to this place. He reflected, "This must be a king, or someone of royal rank, it is impossible for me to be hired here. I had better go to some poor village in search of a job, where food and clothing are easier to get. If I stay here long, I may suffer oppression." Reflecting thus, he rushed away.

Meanwhile the rich elder on his lion-seat had recognized his son at first glance, and with great joy in his heart reflected, "Now I have someone to whom I may pass on my wealth. I have always been thinking of my son, with no means of seeing him, but suddenly he himself has come and my longing is satisfied. Though worn with years, I yearn for him."

Instantly he sent off his attendants to pursue the son quickly and fetch him back. Immediately the messengers hasten forth to seize him. The poor son, surprised and scared, loudly cried his complaint, "I have committed no offense against you, why should I be arrested?" The messengers all the more hastened to lay hold of him and brought him back. Following that, the poor son, thought that although he was innocent he would be imprisoned, and that now he would surely die. He became all the more terrified, fainted away and fell on the ground. The father, seeing this from a distance, sent word to the messengers, "I have no need for this man. Do not bring him by force. Sprinkle cold water on his face to restore him to consciousness and do not speak to him any further." Why? The father, knowing that his son's disposition was inferior, knowing that his own lordly position had caused distress to his son, yet convinced that he was his son, tactfully did not say to others, "This is my son."

A messenger said to the son, "I set you free, go wherever you will." The poor son was delighted, thus obtaining the unexpected release. He arose from the ground and went to a poor village in search of food and clothing. Then the elder, desiring to attract his son, set up a device. Secretly he sent two men, sorrowful and poor in appearance, saying, "Go and visit that place and gently say to the poor man, 'There is a place for you to work here. We will hire you for scavenging, and we both also will work along with you.'" Then the two messengers went in search of the poor son and, having found him, presented him the above proposal. The poor son, having received his wages in advance, joined them in removing a refuse heap.

His father, beholding the son, was struck with compassion for him. One day he saw at a distance, through the window, his son's figure, haggard and drawn, lean and sorrowful, filthy with dirt and dust. He took off his strings of jewels, his soft attire, and put on a coarse, torn, and dirty garment, smeared his body with dust, took a basket in his right hand, and with an appearance fear-inspiring said to the laborers, "Get on with your work, don't be lazy." By such

means he got near to his son, to whom he afterwards said, "Ay, my man, you stay and work here, do not leave again. I will increase your wages, give whatever you need, bowls, rice, wheat-flour, salt, vinegar, and so on. Have no hesitation; besides there is an old servant whom you can get if you need him. Be at ease in your mind; I am, as it were, your father; do not be worried again. Why? I am old and advanced in years, but you are young and vigorous; all the time you have been working, you have never been deceitful, lazy, angry, or grumbling. I have never seen you, like the other laborers, with such vices as these. From this time forth you will be as my own begotten son."

The elder gave him a new name and called him a son. But the poor son, although he rejoiced at this happening, still thought of himself as a humble hireling. For this reason, grew mutual confidence between the father and the son. He went in and out and at his father's for twenty years he continued to be employed in scavenging. After this period, there ease, though his abode was still in a small hut.

Then the father became ill and, knowing that he would die soon, said to the poor son, "Now I possess an abundance of gold, silver, and precious things, and my granaries and treasuries are full to overflowing. I want you to understand in detail the quantities of these things, and the amounts that should be received and given. This is my wish, and you must agree to it. Why? Because now we are of the same mind. Be increasingly careful so that there is no waste." The poor son accepted his instruction and commands, and became acquainted with all the goods. However, he still had no idea of expecting to inherit anything, his abode was still the original place, and he was still unable to abandon his sense of inferiority.

After a short time had again passed, the father noticed that his son's ideas had gradually been enlarged, his aspirations developed, and that he despised his previous state of mind. Seeing that his own end was approaching, he commanded his son to come, and gathered all his relatives, the kings, priests, warriors, and citizens. When they were all assembled, he addressed them saying, "Now, gentlemen, this

is my son, begotten by me. It is over fifty years since, from a certain city, he left me and ran away to endure loneliness and misery. His former name was so-and-so and my name was so-and-so. At that time in that city I sought him sorrowfully. Suddenly I met him in this place and regained him. This is really my son and I am really his father. Now all the wealth which I possess belongs entirely to my son, and all my previous disbursements and receipts are known by this son." When the poor son heard these words of his father, great was his joy at such unexpected news, and thus he thought, "Without any mind for, or effort on my part, these treasures now come to me."

World-honored One! The very rich elder is the Tathagata, and we are all as the Buddha's sons. The Buddha has always declared that we are his sons. But because of the three sufferings, in the midst of births-and-deaths we have borne all kinds of torments, being deluded and ignorant and enjoying our attachment to things of no value. Today the World-honored One has caused us to ponder over and remove the dirt of all diverting discussions of inferior things. In these we have hitherto been diligent to make progress and have got, as it were, a day's pay for our effort to reach nirvana. Obtaining this, we greatly rejoiced and were contented, saying to ourselves, "For our diligence and progress in the Buddha-law what we have received is ample". The Buddha, knowing that our minds delighted in inferior things, by his tactfulness taught according to our capacity, but still we did not perceive that we are really Buddha's sons. Therefore we say that though we had no mind to hope or expect it, yet now the Great Treasure of the King of the Law has of itself come to us, and such things that Buddha-sons should obtain, we have all obtained. (Saddharmapundarika Sutra 4)

The Parable in its Context

In Luke, the parable reveals the nature of God in Christianity, His expectation that all sinners may return to a father-son relationship with Him. Jesus told this parable to a large public consisting of both "religious experts" of the day, the Pharisees, and the people most

despised by them, the tax collectors, prostitutes, and other outcasts (Luke 15,1-2). The Pharisees considered these "sinners" to be outside the acceptable boundary of God's kingdom and accused Jesus for enjoying their company. In contrast to their attitude, He told the previous two parables in the same chapter (The Lost Sheep and The Lost Coin), in order to emphasize His initiative in seeking and saving such sinners. In response, they acknowledged their sinful life and came to Jesus for healing and forgiveness, while the Pharisees considered themselves good enough according to God's standards (see the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector – Luke 18:9-14). Thus the Parable of the Prodigal Son reveals both God's love for those who were ready to accept it (the prodigal son who returns to his father), and His rejection of the Pharisees' hypocrisy and self-centered righteousness (the older son in the parable). Although the contrast between the two sons is an important point in the parable, as the Buddhist parable speaks only of a prodigal son, the teaching about the older son in Luke will be ignored in this comparison.

The Buddhist parable is part of the famous Saddharmapundarika Sutra (also called the Lotus Sutra, composed at the end of the second century AD), which revealed the new teaching of Mahayana Buddhism regarding the bodhisattva beings. The discourse of the Buddha is said to have taken place in front of a very large public, consisting of arhats, nuns, bodhisattvas, gods, and other beings. His teaching was addressed to those who have reached the arhat stage of becoming and are supposed to advance further by becoming a bodhisattva. As the son in the parable shouldn't be satisfied by his lower status, the Buddhist disciples should also aspire to a higher position, that of becoming a bodhisattva. It will eventually be attained step-by-step after a long instructing and testing process.

The Characters

In the gospel, the father represents God, the Ultimate Reality in Christianity, while the prodigal son is the one living in sin, who finally repents and returns to a fellowship relation

with God. In the Sutra, the father is Buddha (or more specifically, the Buddha nature – Dharmakaya), while the son is the one struggling to become an enlightened bodhisattva being.

The Son's Departure and Miserable Condition

The prodigal son in Luke declares he has had enough of staying home in obedience to his father and wants to be on his own. He not only wants to leave home, but he even dares to claim his inheritance, the fortune he is supposed to get at his father's death. Such a demand is extremely outrageous, especially in the Middle Eastern context. However, instead of rebuking or even denouncing his son, the father grants his request.

Soon after this, the son left for a distant country and there he squandered his entire fortune in wild living. This probably was a quite new and interesting experience for him, but it brought him to bankruptcy. Now he had to find a job to make a living in that country and the best offer he had was to feed someone's pigs. In a Jewish context, the pigs are considered unclean animals, therefore being hired to feed them and even being hungry enough to long for their food illustrates the worst possible situation one can reach.

The spiritual meaning of the prodigal son's leaving his home is assimilated in Christianity with man's rebellion against God, his heavenly father. God does not oppose one's freedom of will in choosing how to live. As the son in the parable claimed his inheritance and then squandered it, humans use all that God has granted them (wealth, health, time, and relationships), not for serving Him in obedience, but against His will. This attitude is called sin, and brings humans to the lowest possible stage of decadence. Although living in sin is at first very attractive and pleasant, in the end it leads to destruction, both from an existential and a spiritual point of view.

Another important observation here is that although the father in the parable gave a large fortune to his son, he was still rich after the

son's departure. However, the father's only concern proved to be his son's personal safety and return to the family. His wealth plays no role for him. As the rich man in the parable didn't become poor by his son's departure, God does not lose anything by our decision to live in rebellion to Him. The only one who is losing everything is man. The prodigal son of the Buddhist Sutra leaves home without any fortune from his father. His departure looks more like running away in secrecy. He also becomes needier, but is still able to make a living. The father doesn't seem to have been rich at the moment of his son's departure. He rather became rich after this episode, in another city than the one in which he previously lived with his son. Therefore the son had no wealthy position to remember from home and to eventually return to. Even if he would have, the father had left it, so there was no place for him to return. Regarding the father's concern in this story, he seems more worried about having an heir than about making his son happy again.

The meaning of the son's wandering in the Buddhist tale is that there is no initial position to lose in one's spiritual becoming. As the son leaves his home poor and remains poor, humans have no other inheritance than karma, which makes them wander from one bad incarnation to another. The only truth that governs human existence is suffering and karma, which leads to an endless wandering in the world with no original position to return to. The only spiritual fulfillment is a permanent growth toward an impersonal liberation. This is the Buddhist treasure to be discovered by any cost.

The Way Back Home

The prodigal son of the gospel finally "came to his senses" and acknowledged his dramatic condition. Ashamed, he planned to return to his father, confess his sin, and ask to be hired as a servant. This position, no matter how humiliating it could be in front of his brother and the other servants, was a much better choice than staying with the pigs.

The process of one's "coming to his senses" is called repentance in Christian theology. It involves acknowledging the bad condition of living in sin and making the decision to leave it.

* The Buddhist prodigal son made no decision to return to his father. He continuously wandered from town to town until he unexpectedly arrived at his father's palace. The son didn't even recognize his father, whose situation had changed a lot since his departure. More than this, the father's wealth inspired fear in the son and made him try to run away again in order to not enter into more trouble. Eventually, at the father's command, the attendants seized him and brought him to the palace against his will.

The son's wandering in the world can be interpreted as the effect of karma and reincarnation in one's life. They constantly push man on the one-way of becoming. However, long the process of being reincarnated in different bodies may be, one has to finally reach liberation (that's why the attendants seize the son against his will). One constantly experiences suffering until he has to accept that the best solution for his life is nirvana. Although reaching the status of a bodhisattva (a being that helps other humans attain liberation) seems to confer a personal afterlife destiny, the ultimate stage of becoming is shunya, the void, where nothing personal can remain.

What Happens Back Home?

According to Luke's parable, the father was waiting for his prodigal son. He probably knew that the son couldn't find true satisfaction in what the world had to offer him. Instead of punishing him for his foolish behavior, "while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" (v. 20). Instead of humiliating the son as a repayment for the shame he cast on his father at departure, the father humiliates himself by running to meet him. Such a behavior was totally undignified according to Jewish standards of the time. After the son recited half of his prepared speech,

acknowledging he was wrong, the father interrupted him and commanded the servants to bring him the best robe, put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet. The fattened calf was slaughtered and a feast ordered to celebrate his return. All these symbols prove a 100% forgiveness and rehabilitation of the son to his prior status. The robe was a sign of great distinction, the ring the sign of authority, the sandals a luxury (only slaves were bare-footed), and the slaughter of the fattened calf the sign of a very important celebration in the family. Instead of becoming a hired servant as he hoped, the son was fully restored to the position he had abandoned long before. The Sutra presents in a whole different way the prodigal son's return home. The father unexpectedly recognized him standing at his gate and sent his attendants to seize him and compel him to come to the palace. The son didn't understand the situation and became terrified. The father initially treated him like a stranger because of his "inferior disposition". A sudden restoration was out of the question. Understanding his son's mindset, the father set him free and that he be hired as a scavenger. Although filled with compassion, the father could not reveal his identity until the son deserved his proper place in the family.

He met his son in disguise and encouraged him to be honest in his work in order to be promoted. He promised to increase his salary and provide for his basic needs. The son had first to prove high qualities before being accepted back into the family. So he lived for 20 years in a small hut while still being employed in scavenging. The testing process would have probably continued if the father hadn't become ill, feeling his death to be imminent. Even at this time the son was not fully accepted into the family but only promoted to a higher position, that of accountant over all his father's riches. Without abandoning his sense of inferiority, the son became acquainted with all the goods. Noticing that his son's ideas had gradually changed for the good and that he despised his former status, only then did the father gather all his relatives and friends and declare the former servant to be his son and heir

The Teaching of the Parable in Christianity and Buddhism

The Christian meaning of the parable is clear. All humans need to return to God in repentance and faith. He does not compel humans to do it, so it must be a personal decision. God's forgiveness is not conditioned by attaining high spiritual performances but only by repentance. Jesus Christ paid the price for our reconciliation with God through His death on the cross and His resurrection. There is nothing more to add and one life is enough to accept it.

The parable depicts the amazing availability of God to forgive and restore us, His unlimited grace to bestow upon us, His great love to accept us independently of our status and past. This should give us courage to come to Him in repentance and faith, without fear, and inherit His Kingdom, where personal communion with Him will be everlasting. * The Buddhist parable has a different message. Both the process of being liberated (acknowledged as son) and the meaning of liberation (inheriting the father's estate) have a different meaning. One cannot simply attain liberation at once. The process is very long and demands a progressive accumulation of wisdom until one deserves his place in the hierarchy. Escaping from ignorance and suffering, attaining nirvana, and the becoming of a bodhisattva is a hard-to-win prize that has to be attained gradually by a day-by-day effort in training the mind and overcoming karma. Grace, in Buddhism, cannot be shown directly, but only as the disciple deserves it, which in fact is no grace at all. There is also a major difference from Christianity in defining the status of the liberated person. Personhood has no room in the system. Although the bodhisattva is a personal being, he acts as a temporary catalyst for the sake of other humans that they may also find nirvana. The true ultimate stage of spiritual progress is shunya, the void, where no personal communion can ever exist. It is the final blowing out of the candle. This means that an eternal communion with a Father in His Kingdom makes no sense in traditional

Buddhism. Ultimately, there is no Father to have communion with.

some basic contradictions between the two religions:

The following table summarizes the teaching of the two parables and also reveals

TOPIC	MEANING IN CHRISTIANITY	MEANING IN BUDDHISM
<i>The context</i>	Jesus is teaching sinners, emphasizing their need and opportunity to be reconciled with God.	Buddha is teaching spiritually advanced disciples (<i>arhats</i>) the need for attaining a higher position, that of a <i>bodhisattva</i> .
<i>The characters</i>	God and the sinners.	Buddha (the ultimate impersonal Buddha nature) and the ones struggling to attain it.
<i>The meaning of the son's departure from home</i>	The human attitude of rebellion against God, called sin.	Ignorance starts the wheel of karma.
<i>The son's miserable condition</i>	The human condition under the power of sin, away from personal communion with God.	Karma and reincarnation force one to wander from one physical existence to the next.
<i>The decision to return home</i>	A personal decision to leave sin, called repentance.	Karma and reincarnation lead one to the proper level where wisdom and spiritual progress can be attained.
<i>The father's attitude at the son's arrival</i>	Complete forgiveness of sin and restoration to personal fellowship with God.	Buddha's "grace" makes one progress little by little toward liberation. One has to deserve his position by a process of spiritual development.
<i>Who pays the damage for the lost fortune</i>	God, the Son incarnated as Jesus Christ, paid the price for our forgiveness through His death and resurrection.	The disciple has to "pay himself" the price for erasing his ignorance, by constantly accumulating wisdom.
<i>The son's inheritance</i>	Eternal communion with God in His kingdom.	Attaining an impersonal Ultimate Reality (<i>shunya</i>), where there is no room for personal communion.

Problems with Prayer

Overcoming the Intellectualization of Prayer

Many people arrive in AA with a bias against the custom of saying prayers, or at least the prayers common in the Program and Meetings.

For the Christian Objection

Many Christians take the injunction against memorized or dictated prayers seriously. This is found in the New Testament in Mark 6:4 and 6:5

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

When the groups perform the "Serenity Prayer," "The Lord's Prayer," or the "St. Francis Prayer," many are simply showing the willingness to participate in the ritual of opening or closing a meeting.

It is not prayer – it is ritual and extends the comfort of a predictability to approach the serious work of Recovery.

They do not know they are not praying, but many use this avenue to find their way to faith while confronting the pain and crisis created by alcoholism.

Most meetings allow for personal prayer in silence, but your participation is an act of willing submission to the process of Spiritual Awakening, which is the only result of the Twelfth Step and the effect for which we work, regardless of your specific beliefs of a Spiritual life.

For the Non-Christian Objection

Alcoholics began as part of a Christian organization, the Oxford Groups. When asked to provide a "Christmas Message" for the Grapevine in 1953, Bill Wilson responded by saying:

"The more I thought it over the more I got buffaloed. I said, 'Gee, this society of ours has moved into every quarter of the Earth. Here a great many of us are Christians. A good many are not. We have Jews who look to Jehovah. Out on the plains we have Indians who look to the Great Spirit. And now that we have established beachheads in the Pacific Islands, in Asia, in India, in South Africa... We know that we have brothers and sisters who look to Allah, and some to Buddha.'"

And I thought to myself, 'How can anybody possibly talk about Christmas to all these?'"

Then came this thought, 'Well, by whatever name we call it, we of AA have Christmas every day. In the sense that we give and in the sense that we receive.'"

*Yes. The kind of giving that demands no reward.
The kind of loving that bears no price tag.*

---- Bill Wilson, 1953
At his 18th Anniversary

When AA separated from the Oxford Group, the invitation to Recovery took the form of a Higher Power,” “a God of your understanding,” which can be the god of your own faith.

Some people think the AA program is trying to convert everyone to a specific religion. Religion is not the job of AA – faith is the job of the person in Recovery and is between them and their personal Higher Power.

For the Non-Believer Objection

Contrary to propaganda spread about Alcoholics Anonymous as a religious front; those who do not believe, or actively do not believe, are welcome and invited into the rooms.

We would not be in AA if we had not already experienced enough of a change to know that the ideas we had proved false and did not keep us sober. On page 52 of the Big Book, after outlining the various forms of suffering our unmanageable lives had presented to us:

“Was not a basic solution of these bedevilments more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight? Of course it was.”

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Many Christians object to the prayers, as well, because their faith tells them to pray from the heart, not based on set, scripted prayers.

Prayers are a custom going back to the time of AA’s formation as part of the Oxford Groups. To say the words of the prayer is not praying, any more than saying the Pledge of Allegiance was pledging the flag or the country. As a child, I was required to say the Pledge of Allegiance because that was the way my school day started.

There are also many people for whom the Prayer and the Pledge are genuinely of whom they are or what they believe.

For those of us who have long worship at the altar of the Human Brain, intellectual pride can be sufficient to keep us drunk. We have seen non-believers stay sober based on their personal knowledge that they are not the greatest power of the Universe, particularly when we had spent so much of our lives acting as if we were.

Saying the Prayer is not intellectual hypocrisy, it is the concession that staying sober is more important than intellectual pride; that finding the new life is more important than “being right.”

Those who do not have a faith, or are very actively against the very concept of any religion, may have a more difficult job to gain and sustain long-term sobriety. Our egos may push us to stop drinking for months, or even years, but we can be guaranteed that life will provide some punches that will require more than our solitary mental prowess can muster.

Many people that come to AA use the rooms (the body of people who stay sober) as their Power Greater than Themselves. They could do together what we failed to do alone and they were a visible resource for those of us who cannot, or will not, concede the core of “spiritual.”

Turning back to our favorite reference, dictionary.com, we find several entries for “spiritual”:

Dictionary Definition of “Spiritual”

spir-it-u-al [spir-i-choo-uhl] Show IPA
–adjective

1. *of, pertaining to, or consisting of spirit; incorporeal.*
2. *of or pertaining to the spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature: a spiritual approach to life.*

3. *closely akin in interests, attitude, outlook, etc.: the professor's spiritual heir in linguistics.*
4. *of or pertaining to spirits or to spiritualists; supernatural or spiritualistic.*
5. *characterized by or suggesting predominance of the spirit; ethereal or delicately refined: She is more of a spiritual type than her rowdy brother.*
6. *of or pertaining to the spirit as the seat of the moral or religious nature.*
7. *of or pertaining to sacred things or matters; religious; devotional; sacred.*
8. *of or belonging to the church; ecclesiastical: lords spiritual and temporal.*
9. *of or relating to the mind or intellect.*

–noun

10. *a spiritual or religious song: authentic folk spirituals.*
11. *spirituals, affairs of the church.*
12. *a spiritual thing or matter.*

For our purpose, many meanings of the word can apply, but it is the first definition that we feel best serves the understanding of “spirit” as presented through the Program.

“1. *of, pertaining to, or consisting of spirit; incorporeal.*”

A feature of AA Recovery that has proved a serious obstacle for intellectuals in the Program has been the necessary concession that there are things in our life that are not subject to discussion under the laws of physics and our understanding of the material world.

We find a level of coincidence far beyond statistical norms, which guide us to the next correction phase of our life and Recovery that becomes increasingly difficult to accept as random chance.

We find harmonics of situations in meetings with what we encounter in the world that becomes almost eerie.

We find that when we do the Program the way the Program says to do it, we find periods of unexplainable comfort, serenity, and sometimes joy or happiness where we should logically be free of such elevation in emotional response.

Over time, we realize our ability to understand our own reality is limited. The human brain cannot adequately classify or reduce reality to understandable terms.

Religious people have a way that works for them, regardless of our judgment of their beliefs. For them, “God did it” is a perfectly acceptable answer.

Perhaps we can end the intellectual war by simply admitting “it happened” and remain open to learning, experiencing, and possibly, understanding more as time goes on.

There is a limit to understanding as it affects the real world. If you fall off a high building, understanding gravity does not change the rate at which you fall.

Many things simply are. They exist and can have effects on our lives, emotions, and our place in the world, without supplying an answer for our ever-questioning brain.

Intellectual alcoholics love to judge things as “good” or “bad,” but in Recovery we are bombarded with realities that defy our judgment – so we are faced with a dilemma.

Do we accept a reality we cannot understand, which gives us health, joy, and belonging, or do we insist on rejecting the reality of Recovery to the small part we can classify and remain isolated, risking Recovery in favor of an imagined superiority?

When you stand in the room and say the words to the prayer, or simply stand with the other people in the group as they say the prayer, you are

really in a room of AA, really with people who have shared the pain of your experience and who are willing to share their Recovery with you.

Why fight?

A Different Idea of God as an Higher Power

Some people have a serious problem with religion or what has previously been presented to them as “God.”

It is sometimes suggested that a newcomer use the group as a Higher Power because the men and women in that group can do what the newcomer can't. Stay sober. They come to understand “God” as “Good Orderly Direction” or “Group of Drunks.”

Some say the struggling newcomer should accept some inanimate object as their higher power. The idea is not to worship that item but to stop worshipping your own brain and desires as the force that rules reality. As one old-timer said, “It gets your life out of the hands of the idiot who's had it so far!”

The key is to give up the idea that the newcomer is God, or gets to decide how the world should be. The idea is willing submission, whether someone else agrees with their conception of a Higher Power or not. It is a move in the necessary direction.

There is another suggestion. Completely unofficial, of course. The person objecting to the “God” aspect begins their prayer as “God, in whom I do not know if I will ever believe...” and then say the prayer.

In the **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions**, the Serenity Prayer ends with “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

Your definition of “thy” is based your personal conception of God, the Power Greater Than Yourself.

The Lord's Prayer

An Interpretation from the Aramaic

Although we know the prayer was written in Greek (a trader's dialect called "Kohlne"), the words were first spoken in the era's native language of Aramaic.

Aramaic has its own structure, grammar, and cultural references; there are no words for colors, but comparisons to things of that color. There is no word for daily; the two syllable word for God-the-Father is a source of intense debate as to the complexity of the meaning. Over twenty translations can be found on the web.

In Aramaic, ideas can merge or interact with the words before or after to deepen the meaning.

I say that I expected to be thrown out of AA because

- a) I don't smoke cigarettes,
- b) I don't drink coffee, and
- c) I'm not a Christian.

When asked why I say the Lord's Prayer at the end of the meeting, it is because of what the prayer says!

TRANSLATION KEY

Italic Bold – Aramaic

In Parentheses – (King James Standard)

Bulleted – • Translations

Ahwûn

(Our Father)

- * My Source/Creator
- * O cosmic Birther, from whom the breath of life comes
- * Radiance that Saturates the universe

D'bwasmâja

(Who art in Heaven)

- * That fills/saturates the universe, above and below
- * That who fills all realms of sound, light, and vibration
- * That who is all of substance and vibration

Nethkâdasch schmachv

(Hallowed be Thy Name)

- * Your name is already sacred
- * May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest
- * allow me to see / know / believe

Têtê malkuthach.

(Thy Kingdom Come)

- * Your Heavenly Domain approaches
- * Your Justice approaches
- * Your Will is already being done in Heaven

Nehwê tzevjânach aikâna d'bwasmâja af b'arha.

(Thy Will be done on Earth as it is In Heaven)

- * Let Your Will be true on earth (that is material and dense) just as it is in the universe (all that vibrates)

- * Your will is already being done within the Earth as it is already being done in the heavens

Hawvlân lachma. d'sûnkanân yaomâna

(Give us this day Our Daily Bread³)

- Give us wisdom (understanding, assistance) according to our need
- * Sustain/Nourish me

Waschboklân chaubên wachtahên aikâna daf chnân schwoken l'chaijabên.

(And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors)

- * Forgive me and my wrongs to the extent I am able to give forgiveness to others.

Wela tachlân l'nesjuna

(And Lead us Not into Temptation)

- * Let us not be lost in superficial things (materialism, common temptations)
- * Free me from desire or free me from lies/illusion
- * Please do not put me to the test
- * Detach the fetters of faults that bind us, just as we let go the guilt we hold of others
- * Allow me the same forgiveness to others as you are already showing to me

Ela patzân min bischa

(But deliver us from Evil)

- * But let us be freed from that what keeps us off from our true purpose
- * Be my direction / purpose

Metol dilachie malkutha wahaila wateschbuchta

(For thine is the kingdom and the power)

* From you comes the all-working will, the vital strength to act

* You are the source of the song that is life.

Lahlâm almîn

(and the Glory Forever and Ever)

* Sealed in trust, faith and truth

* I confirm with my entire being

* As you are truly the only god and deserving of all my worship

Amêin – (Amen)

The word Amen (Tiberian Hebrew “Amein” pronounced ah-MAIN, Arabic “Amin” pronounced AH-men) translates as “So may it be” or “Truly” and is a declaration of affirmation found in the Hebrew Bible, the New testament, and the Qur'an. It also has come to mean “As it is”, “Verily”, “I agree”, “Let it be,” or “Well said.”

It was used by the Jewish congregation to affirm the words said by the leader of the worship. It was later adopted by the Christians from the Jews as the concluding formula for a prayer. In the Islam it is the standard ending to the sutras (Chapters or divisions).

Drawn from over 20 sources of Aramaic translations found through internet searches, some of the more academic repute than others. By reading several different versions of a translation, you can get an idea of the real meaning within the original document.

³ There is no reference of time in Aramaic, so daily is not a concept - it is always “today.”

The Peace Prayer of St. Francis

by Dr. Christian Renoux, Associate Professor of the University of Orleans, France

Original Text of the Peace Prayer

Belle prière à faire pendant la Messe

Seigneur, faites de moi un instrument de votre paix.

Là où il y a de la haine, que je mette l'amour.

Là où il y a l'offense, que je mette le pardon.

Là où il y a la discorde, que je mette l'union.

Là où il y a l'erreur, que je mette la vérité.

Là où il y a le doute, que je mette la foi.

Là où il y a le désespoir, que je mette l'espérance.

Là où il y a les ténèbres, que je mette votre lumière.

Là où il y a la tristesse, que je mette la joie.

Ô Maître, que je ne cherche pas tant à être consolé qu'à consoler,

à être compris qu'à comprendre,

à être aimé qu'à aimer,

car c'est en donnant qu'on reçoit,

c'est en s'oubliant qu'on trouve,

c'est en pardonnant qu'on est pardonné,

c'est en mourant qu'on ressuscite à l'éternelle vie.

Source: La Clochette, n° 12, déc. 1912, p. 285.

Origin of this Prayer

The first appearance of the Peace Prayer occurred in France in 1912 in a small spiritual magazine called La Clochette (The Little Bell). It

was published in Paris by a Catholic association known as La Ligue de la Sainte-Messe (The Holy Mass League), founded in 1901 by a French priest, Father Esther Bouquerel (1855-1923). The prayer bore the title of 'Belle prière à faire pendant la messe' (A Beautiful Prayer to Say During the Mass), and was published anonymously. The author could possibly have been Father Bouquerel himself, but the identity of the author remains a mystery.

The prayer was sent in French to Pope Benedict XV in 1915 by the French Marquis Stanislas de La Rochethulon. This was soon followed by its 1916 appearance, in Italian, in L'Osservatore Romano [the Vatican's daily newspaper]. Around 1920, the prayer was printed by a French Franciscan priest on the back of an image of St. Francis with the title 'Prière pour la paix' (Prayer for Peace) but without being attributed to the saint. Between the two world wars, the prayer circulated in Europe and was translated into English. It was attributed for the first time to Saint Francis in 1927 by a French Protestant Movement, Les Chevaliers du Prince de la Paix (The Knights of the Prince of Peace), founded by Étienne Bach (1892-1986).

The first translation in English that we know of appeared in 1936 in Living Courageously, a book by Kirby Page (1890-1957), a Disciple of Christ minister, pacifist, social evangelist, writer, and editor of The World Tomorrow (New York City). Page clearly attributed the text to St. Francis of Assisi. During World War II and immediately

after, this prayer for peace began circulating widely as the Prayer of St. Francis, especially through Francis cardinal Spellman's books, and over the years has gained a worldwide popularity with people of all faiths.

For more information, see the book by Dr. Christian Renoux, *La prière pour la paix attribuée à saint François: une énigme à résoudre*, Paris, Editions franciscaines, 2001, 210 p.: 12.81 euros + shipping (ISBN: 2-85020-096-4). – Order From: Éditions franciscaines, 9, rue Marie-Rose F-75014 Paris.

Note: Dr. Christian Renoux, is continuing his research on the propagation of this prayer, and is looking for new information about its publication in English between 1925 and 1945, and in all other languages between 1912 and today. Our thanks to Dr. Renoux for his permission to publish the Original Text of this very popular Prayer and the history of its origin.

How to Not Meditate

*There are only
Two ways to fail.
To not complete, or
To not begin.*

-- Buddhist saying

This is not an official or authorized document.
It is a reflection on the varieties for the practice of
developing a quiet mind for spiritual growth and
inner peace.

Meditation is not something you do.
Meditation is the things you do not do.
Meditation is not magic.

Meditation is tuning into yourself like a radio
where the radio no longer picks up the desired
station.

Meditation is not scientific.

Meditation is finding an inner calm and
spiritual guidance.

There is no official form of Meditation.

Meditation is more than one tool for
meditation.

Some Meditation practices are complex and
based on a single, approved form of spirituality.

Beginner's Meditations must be simple.

Religions and beliefs have a tradition of
Meditation as part of its Practice.

Catholics have the Rosary.

Protestants have group prayers and weekly
schedules.

Monks and nuns of all faiths have beads and
chants.

Hindus have the centering techniques of Yoga.

Moslems have the trance dancing dervishes.

Native Americans have traditions of vision
quests and time in quiet contemplation.

Atheists have their personal routines or areas of
thought.

They all work.

Find the style and method that works best for
you.

Do Not Try to Find God While Meditating.

Think of being young and going to a store. It
may be the grocery store with your mother, an
aunt, or some other grown-up. It may have been to
a department store, the fair, a school event, or a
festival.

If you were to get separated from the adult, the
worst thing you can do is go looking for them.

You might miss each other if both of you are
moving.

Sit still and wait for them to find you.

And they will find you.

While you are waiting, you can be calm and
secure that they are searching for you and you are
making yourself findable.

You are lost – not God, no matter how you
understand God.

If you become still and stay right here, right
now, you give yourself the chance to be found.

You make yourself "Findable."

And you are safe, no matter what is going on in your life.

Ways to Meditate

Meditation requires a dedicated time spent with your chosen practice and repetition. A simple timer can set limits on the time spent meditating – a watch alarm, a kitchen timer, etc.

You can meditate alone or with others – both ways have value.

You can meditate being still or moving. Some people meditate best sitting in a natural setting with no agenda; others find a strict liturgy leads to mental and emotional liberation.

None of these are required, but you can choose parts of any of them to improve your personal meditation.

Many people have been meditating for years and not even known it. They have something they do that provides repetition and makes them comfortable exactly where they are, doing what they are doing.

They often look forward to it, not understanding why it gives them such a sense of peace.

Meditation can be sitting still or it can be moving.

Meditation can be doing nothing or doing something.

Meditation can be meaningful contemplation of an image, a verse, or a saying; or sitting looking inward at a memory of such an idea.

Meditation can be an effortless stepping away from stress and worry.

Meditation can be found in a favorite incense, the fragrance a certain flower, or appreciating the aroma of your favorite cup of coffee.

Meditation can be listening to a particular type of music, or singing.

Meditation can be watching a favorite image, scene, or the abstract movement in stream of water or lava lamp.

Meditation can be performing a task; gardening, knitting, dancing, drawing, working a potter's wheel, building a wall, cooking, running, or riding a bicycle.

You will discover the form that gives you the best calm. Begin with a few suggestions, and even when you find your favorite way to meditate, try other ways as well.

You can always discover a new answer that does not make the old answer wrong, but enriches you by giving you more than one channel.

A Simple Beginning

There is no required decoration, devices, furniture, or approved chant for meditation – but someone you know may have a suggestion from their own practice.

Find a spot to be comfortable, or at least more comfortable than you are normally. At times, this may not be completely comfortable, particularly in the beginning. Someone may suggest a position, a posture, or something else they use for their own meditation.

Determine a way to limit your beginning meditation – a timer, a specific length of music, or other indicator. Later, you may want to sit and meditate for as long as you feel focused and relaxed.

You may start in a quiet setting; a room, a spot outdoors where you will not be disturbed, or even sitting in a car. Later, you will be able to meditate anywhere, regardless of noise or distraction.

You may start with a familiar movement; walking, running, gardening, knitting, cooking, singing, reading, or whatever gives you the most quiet.

Don't expect anything. If you do expect something, don't criticize yourself or try to make

yourself wrong for having the expectation. Simply notice it and understand you are trying something new and may have no experience in how to 'not expect.' You aren't meditating to criticize yourself.

You can sit, or begin the motion as you feel most comfortable. In the beginning, it is usually suggested that you not lay down to relax. You could easily go to sleep and it is not the purpose of meditation to bring on sleep.

Start with one thing -

a smell,

a sound,

a motion,

a passage or verse for contemplation.

If moving, how long do you want to be doing your movement (not where you will go or the product of your action)?

The Meditation

Don't worry about the past or project into the future.

Concentrate on the moment you are in – right now, right here.

Try to notice things without "thinking" about them.

Notice your breathing.

Notice the sounds around you.

Notice what you see.

Notice the smells.

Notice the tastes.

Notice the feel of air brushing against your skin or the cloth against your skin.

But try to not "think" about any of them. Avoid thinking if they are good or bad, pleasant or annoying, useful or beautiful – just notice them, as they are.

If you should accidentally start thinking, that is not bad. Just notice that you are thinking about something and try to get your attention back to the experience of being aware of this exact moment.

Maybe you will have someone come to you and want to talk while you are being quiet. That means that as part of your "now" you have someone who wants to talk to you. It may be about something for their own benefit, but you have someone who wants to talk to you.

Was that always true?

Successful Meditation

With successful meditation you simplify your life to the exact moment where you are.

You will find a new starting point in "here" and "now."

You will discover that every moment in your life has had a "here" and "now," but you missed them because of thoughts of "there" and "then."

You will find a new ability to recognize new answers, the ability to change directions with less stress, and the serenity that comes without.

We will notice the lost opportunities of the past without criticism or judgment. Simply notice the difference between a life lived in the "there" and "then," and a new life lived in the "here" and "now."

If we remember the idea being lost in a store, you will discover how to meditate to make yourself "findable" to your own Higher Power, or God as you understand God.

"we will understand the word serenity, and we will know peace..."

Page 84

Prayers from the Big Book

"I earnestly advise every alcoholic to read this book through, and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray."

William D. Silkworth, MD - Page xxx

"God is everything or He is nothing. God either is or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"

Page 53

We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Page 59

Third Step

God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of Life. May I do Thy will always!

Page 63

Fourth Step

RESENTMENT

We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done".

Page 67

FEAR

We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.

Page 68

SEX

We asked God to mold our ideals and help us live up to them.

Page 69

In meditation, we ask God what we do about each specific matter.

Page 69

To sum up about sex: We pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity and for strength to do the right thing.

Page 70

Fifth Step

We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.

Page 75

We ask if we have omitted anything.

Page 75

Sixth Step

If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

Page 76

Seventh Step

My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen

Page 76

Eighth Step

If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes.

Page 76

Ninth Step

LEGAL MATTERS

We ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be.

Page 79

OTHERS EFFECTED

If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help.

Page 80

INFIDELITY

Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind.

Page 82

FAMILY

So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

Page 83

Tenth Step

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.

Page 84

Everyday is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all our activities. "How can I best serve Thee – Thy will (not mine) be done".

Page 85

Eleventh Step

NIGHT

After mediation on the day just completed, "We ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken".

Page 86

MORNING

Before we begin our day, "we ask god to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity... dishonest or self-seeking motives".

Page 86

In thinking about our day, "We ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or decision".

Page 87

We usually conclude the period of mediation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We especially ask for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no requests for ourselves only We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends.

Page 86

ALL DAY

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.

Page 87 - 88

Twelfth Step

Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come IF your own house is in order.

Page 164

Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.

Page 102

But Remember...

The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation.

Page 63

When ready, we say something like this...

Page 76

Prayers recited like magic incantations can have little effect. We must pray from our heart, with all the honesty and willingness to mean exactly what we say.

It works, if we work it.

We will die, if we don't.

Living in the Body of God

A PERSONAL MEDITATION

It always begins the same way.

In Christianity.

In Buddhism.

In the Jewish Bible.

In the Koran.

In the tribal stories.

There was nothing.

Then there was something.

There was the Word.

There was the Song.

There was the Dream.

Even science suggests – there was nothing, then there was the Big Bang.

The moment of being, the beginning, is the one God saying “Be!” but not in the feeble scope of a word in English.

Everything began, and that instant of glorious and incomprehensible change, the origin, the being is what we call God, Ra, Ahuramazda, Yahweh, Jehovah, Allah, Ram, Manitou, Wakan ..., the thousand names and faces of the God-Who-is-All. It is God-Who-is-All as we each can understand that word. It is all the faces of the universe waiting to smile on us when, at last, we open our eyes.

Nothing exists outside that moment of creation and cannot exist outside of God-Who-is-All.

We live within the living body of the one God-Who-is-All.

One God. Not two. Not God and Satan. Satan is unnecessary. Everything we can point to as Evil has been done by humans for their own reasons. One God, all-encompassing, and whose motion and design will forever remain beyond human kind.

Men create evil and force others to live through their created evil. They are there because others invested in the power that was to have been used for their direct contact to the God-Who-is-All. They have surrendered their truth in a grab for power, for comfort, for righteousness sake, and for greed of gold, of flesh, or of pride.

They may claim the Devil tempted them, but they performed the actions of evil.

Hurricanes are not evil.

Floods are not evil.

Lightning is not evil.

Decay is not evil.

Death is not evil.

It is the flow established by what we call God, by whatever name. It is the natural flow to begin, to flourish, to decline, and end to make way for the next cycle and next generations.

How this was accomplished will remain the Mystery. Science will project and speculate and theorize to try to reduce the all-existence of ‘God’

to something our tiny brains can feel that they can contain, but the Mystery will remain. Theologians will populate the universe with a face or name or names or symbols or restrictions on the all-beingness of 'God,' but the Mystery will expand their greatest explanations.

It has never been our purpose or our capacity to understand the God-Who-is-All.

It will never be our domain to comprehend the complexity of the All, but as humans we have a need to feel we have understanding and truth.

As humans, there is a place for each of us within the universe. It is not on the top or on the bottom, but it is perfectly shaped for us. We already live there, but deny our place in the universe by will and desire.

There is no "God-sized hole" within us for God to fill. There is a whole the exact size and shape of each of us for us to recognize as our place in the God-Who-is-All.

We concoct stories, fables, parables, myths, artificial histories, and sometimes, populations of supporting spirits, angels, demons, and other fantasies to explain what will always remain beneath the abject totality of the God-Who-is-All.

One God, one universal truth of change and flow that transcends time or geography, available to all who seek that contact, which we are taught to deny from infancy.

"Be Still and Know that I am God," we were told.

"Before Abraham was, I am," we were told.

There was no design of separation, whatever those who would ensure privilege say to the populations who were raised to honor the society of men instead of the God-Who-is-All.

The way of what is a flow we can find to be Love. Through trial and victory and sickness and passion, there is a flow that carries us through the stream of time to our fate, and the whole of that

span of time is within the body of the God-Who-is-All from the moment before existence to the moment after the death of time.

God is the medium through which we exist in the same way the river is the medium through which a fish lives, or the sky is the medium of the birds. We are saturated by the God-Who-is-All because we are part of the flow started with that first moment.

We can only understand sin as the separation of ourselves from the God-Who-is-All by our will and belief of individual power. Separation from the source, or the illusion of separation, creates hunger for completion that expresses itself in greed and lust and fear and the other familiar deadly sins.

No amount of accumulation in the transient world can satisfy the hunger or the emptiness the separation creates. Perhaps we can be numbed, lulled into a comfortable illusion for a while. We can raise our children in delusion that this physical accumulation is happiness, but each generation will seek its own solution to the emptiness the separation creates.

If the God-Who-is-All does not saturate everything and everyone and everywhen, how is it that any man, woman, or child that finds the need to connect with the God-Who-is-All can make that contact to the greater pattern of what is true, and find fulfillment in their proper place in the universe, giving and receiving as part of the intended flow?

They are already there.

Who does God not love? Where is the child born of man or animal that is not part of this saturated God-Who-is-All? Who can defy the will and design of the God-Who-is-All to be part of the greater reality; even though that reality is beyond any conception we can contain in our tiny little skulls with the even smaller little brains within. That which is love and harmony is present

in every cell and stone and wind, though it may defy our attempt to define what that love and harmony 'should' be. The fantasy that people must never hurt, that hearts must never be broken, that loved ones will never suffer or die without an understandable reason, is part of that flow and our need for explanation is not God's need to explain.

Who can hurt God? Who has the power to change any of the true being of the universe by an act of will, a device, or a philosophy? The belief that we can defy God is an illusion that creates its own suffering in separation from the God-Who-is-All. We can only create the illusion of separation from God, but we are still part of the God-Who-is-All, despite our desire or understanding.

Who can disappoint God? To believe that we have somehow failed to live to some fantasized destiny only serves to hurt ourselves. The God-Who-is-All will flow forward while we fight the low. We fight until we are exhausted and fall into that communion of bliss with the God-Who-is-All, or do some self-destructive action that still does not deprive the God-Who-is-All of our breath and body.

Who can argue to get God-Who-is-All to change the reality (as if the idea of the speck of a being within this great river of time to change its flow), to make it flow uphill because of a petty desire or defiant design? Within the flow of the God-Who-is-All is the path, the freedom is ours to participate in that low to fulfill the part we are there to lay, or resist that flow and cause ourselves the suffering of our own defiance. The God-Who-is-All will accomplish the flow with another raised up to take the role you have refused; that new one will enjoy the path and belonging and peace that should have been your own.

You are given your way to approach the God-Who-is-All and by your expression of surrender and suppression of defiant will, you can approach by the face you are able to understand. When

people rise up to force others to believe only as their own personal understanding of contact expresses their contact with the God-Who-is-All, their adventuring beyond their own direct contact is a flurry of defiance that will generate everything that we call Evil, they will pass and the flow will go on.

Where is there to go after you die? You already live within the very body of the God to whom you think you pray and to whom you go? You are already there. Matter cannot be created or destroyed within the creation, so the fabric of your body will continue throughout time. Your breath may leave your lungs, but your last exhalation will continue for eternity. That which has been your separated personality rejoins the body of God to which it already belongs, made greater in the joining. It is the great unknown of the soul, as we perceive the soul – the migration to Paradise or Perdition, as we have been taught. Who would willingly keep himself from the belonging and tranquility of serving as is your own personal role and discovering your fulfillment here and now?

Our effort and support of each other expresses our fate. When life is based on desire, fear, and desperate accumulation for satisfaction, then what need is there for a Hell if the life you have been given is separated from the God-Who-is-All?

What need is there for Hell when we have kept ourselves apart from the God-Who-is-All? The life lived for self is punishment incarnate, to waste the moments we have fearing we will never possess that which will make us whole, when the whole of reality is ours for the Surrender, is the separation that is the very Hell we fear.

What need is there for Heaven when the life lived in acceptance and service is the reward of the worthy life? To find peace that the trials and torments of childhood are the baggage of the preceding lives, and find the freedom to choose the new way, is the Bliss we seek. To be in the proper position of giving and receiving from the

God-Who-is-All, expressed in our actions to community, to children, to society and to our world, is the very Heaven we seek.

To take a final breath with the knowledge that one has overcome the emptiness of desire and the shadow of wealth in the physical world, to have actively taken the action to improve individual contact to the God-Who-is-All, however imperfectly, is entering the gates of Paradise.

To comfort those who believe our passing will lessen themselves is the Love we have always needed. To know that there is a legacy of comfort and improvement in the continual effort to become more, has been within the river of time, is the serenity of joining with the God-Who-is-All, whether praising at the throne or a blissful eternal movement with the force and being that is the God-Who-is-All, is the Reward.

There is one God and, as you read this, you breathe God in and out of your lungs; the saturated God-Who-is-All fills your blood and holds your feet to the ground. The world beyond your door has paths and choices.

Am I on the path to the God-Who-is-All or the path of self?

Am I giving the Love I need to receive so that the Love I need can fill me again to be given away freely?

Am I an instrument or a whirlwind of desire and a scar in the lives of those around me?

Do I create suffering by the fulfillment of my desires?

Do I know that I am living within the body of the one God-Who-is-All?

Carrying the Message

Over the years, tens of thousands of recovering alcoholics have researched, distilled, and interpreted the lore of Recovery.

The purpose of this section is to provide the student, sponsors, or would-be teachers of the aspects of Recovery to a newcomer.

We are all newcomers. Every day is a new country we have not explored before. Time in recovery may give us experience that may help us, but we continue to require the honesty, open mindedness, willingness, and humility we needed at the beginning.

Take what you need and leave the rest.

AA Chronology

This list has been drawn from many sources and is offered for general references.

July 22, 1877 – William Duncan Silkworth is born in Brooklyn, NY.

August 8, 1879 – Dr. Bob born in St. Johnsbury, VT.

March 21, 1881 – Anne R, Dr. Bob's wife, is born.

January 2, 1889 – Sister Ignatia, born Ballyhane, Ireland.

August 15, 1890 – E M Jellinek is born, author of "The Disease Concept of Alcoholism" and the "Jellinek Curve".

March 4, 1891 – Lois W is born.

December 27, 1893 – Rev Samuel Shoemaker is born.

November 26, 1895 – Bill W born in East Dorsett, VT.

March 25, 1898 – Jim B ("The Vicious Cycle") is born.

October 15, 1904 – Marty M, early AA woman, is born in Chicago.

February 1908 – Bill makes boomerang.

January 25, 1915 – Dr. Bob marries Anne Ripley.

January 24, 1918 – Bill marries Lois Burnham in the Swedenborg Church in Brooklyn Heights.

February 15, 1918 – Sue Smith Windows, Dr. Bob's adopted daughter, is born.

May 1919 – Bill returns home from service.

October 20, 1928 – Bill writes promise to Lois in family Bible to quit drinking. By Thanksgiving adds second promise.

January 1929 – Bill W. writes third promise in Bible to quit drinking.

September, 1930 – Bill writes 4th (last) promise in family Bible to quit drinking.

August 1934 – Rowland H and Cebra persuade court to parole Ebby T. to them.

November 1934 – Ebby T. carries message to Bill.

November 11, 1934 – Armistice Day; Bill starts drinking after dry spell, beginning of Bill's last drunk.

December 1934 – Bill & Lois start attending Oxford Group meetings.

December 11, 1934 – Bill admitted to Towns Hosp 4th/last time (fall '33, '34 in summer, midsummer, and final admittance). Bill's last drink is one beer he brought with him to Towns.

December 12, 1934 – Bill has Spiritual Experience at Towns Hospital.

December 13 or 14, 1934 – Ebby visits Bill at hospital, brings William James's book, "Varieties of Religious Experience".

December 1934 to May 1935 – Bill works with alcoholics, but fails to sober any of them. Lois reminds him HE is sober.

April 1935 – Dr. Silkworth tells Bill to quit preaching at drunks & tell them of obsession & allergy.

May 11, 1935 – Bill W. makes calls from the Mayflower Hotel and is referred to Dr. Bob.

May 12, 1935 @ 5 pm – Bill W. meets Dr. Bob at the home of Henrietta Seiberling.

June 10, 1935 – The date that is celebrated as Dr. Bob's last drink and the official founding date of AA. There is some evidence that the founders, in trying to reconstruct the history, got the date wrong and it was actually June 17.

June 26, 1935 – Bill Dotson. (AA #3) enters Akron's City Hospital for his last detox and his first day of sobriety.

June 28, 1935 – Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson visits Bill Dotson at Akron's City Hospital.

October 17, 1935 – Ebby T., Bill's sponsor, moves in with Bill and Lois.

December 1955 – 'Man on the Bed' painting by Robert M. first appears in Grapevine. Painting originally called 'Came to Believe'.

March 1936 – AA has ten members staying sober. At end of 1936, AA has 15 members.

October 1936 – Bill C., a Canadian alchy staying at Bill's house, commits suicide using a gas stove.

November 1936 – Fitz M. leaves Towns Hospital to become 'AA #3 in NY', with Bill W. and Hank P.

January 15, 1937 – Fitz M. brings AA meetings to Washington DC.

February 11, 1937 – First New Jersey meeting is held at the home of Hank P. ("The Unbeliever" in the first edition). Some sources report this as happening February 13, 1937.

September 13, 1937 – Florence R., 1st female in AA in NY.

November 1937 – Bill and Dr. Bob compare notes in Akron; count forty cases staying sober. The meeting of the Akron Group considers Bill's ideas for how to expand the movement ... a book, AA hospitals, paid missionaries. It passed by a majority of 2.

December 12, 1937 – Bill meets with Rockefeller Foundation and tries to get money.

December 13, 1937 – Rockland State Mental Hospital takes patients to meeting in New Jersey.

February 11, 1938 – Clarence S. ("Home Brewmeister" 1st-3rd edition) sobriety date.

March-May 1938 – Bill begins writing the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Works Publishing Inc. established to support writing and printing of book.

April 11, 1938 – The Alcoholic Foundation is formed as a trusteeship for AA (sometimes reported as May 1938).

May 1, 1939 – Bank forecloses on 182 Clinton Street. (sometimes reported as April 26, 1939).

June 16, 1938 – Jim Burwell, "The Vicious Cycle" in Big Book, has his last drink.

June 24, 1938 – Two Rockefeller associates tells the press about the Big Book "Not to bear any author's name but to be by 'Alcoholics Anonymous.'"

August 11, 1938 – Akron & NY members begin writing stories for Big Book.

July 15 1938 – 1st documented use of name *Alcoholics Anonymous*, AA archives letter Bill to Willard Richardson.

July 18 1938 – In letter to Dr. Richards at Johns Hopkins, Bill uses *Alcoholics Anonymous* as working title for Big Book & name for the fellowship.

September 21, 1938 – Bill W. & Hank P. form Works Publishing Co.

December 1938 – *Twelve Steps* is written.

January 1939 – 400 copies of manuscript of Big Book is circulated for comment, evaluation, and sale.

January 3, 1939 – First sale of Works Publishing Co. stock is recorded.

January 8, 1938 – New York AA splits from the Oxford Group.

February 1939 – Dr. Harry Tiebout, 1st psychiatrist endorses AA and uses in his practice.

February 1939 – Dr. Howard of Montclair, NJ suggests swapping "you musts" for "we ought" in the Big Book.

February 5, 1939 – Dr. Bob tells Ruth Hock in a letter that AA has "to get away from the Oxford Group atmosphere".

March 1, 1939 – Readers Digest fails to write article on AA.

April 1, 1939 – Publication date of Alcoholics Anonymous, AA's Big Book.

April 10, 1939 – The first ten copies of the Big Book arrives at the office Bill and Hank P. shared.

April 24, 1989 – Dr. Leonard Strong dies.

April 25, 1939 – Morgan R. interviewed on Gabriel Heatter radio show.

April 26 or May 1, 1939 – Bank forecloses on 182 Clinton Street.

May 1939 – Lois W. Home Replacement Fund starts at Alcoholic Foundation.

May 6, 1939 – Clarence S. of Cleveland tells Dr. Bob, his sponsor, he will not go back to Oxford Group meetings in Akron and will start an "AA" meeting in Cleveland.

May 10, 1939 – Clarence S. announces to the Akron Oxford Group members that the Cleveland members are starting a meeting in Cleveland and calling it Alcoholics Anonymous.

May 11, 1939 – First group to officially call itself Alcoholics Anonymous meets at Abby G.'s house in Cleveland (some sources say the 18th).

June 7, 1939 – Bill and Lois Wilson have an argument, the first of two times Bill almost slipped.

June 25, 1939 – The New York Times reviewer writes that the Big Book is "more soundly based psychologically than any other treatment I have ever come upon."

July 1939 – Warren C. joined AA Cleveland, causes debate because he was not hospitalized.

July 4, 1939 – 1st AA meeting starts in Flatbush, NY.

July 14, 1939 – Dr. Tiebout gives Big Book to Marty M. who promptly throws it back at him.

August 1939 – Dr. Bob wrote & may have signed article for Faith magazine.

August 16, 1939 – Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia admit 1st alcoholic to St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, Ohio.

September 1, 1939 – 1st AA group founded in Chicago by Earl T.

September 30, 1939 – Article in Liberty magazine, "Alcoholics and God" by Morris Markey.

October 1939 – 1st central committee formed in Cleveland; 1st example AA rotation.

October 14, 1939 – Journal of American Medical Association gives Big Book unfavorable review.

October 21, 1939 – Cleveland Plain Dealer begins series of articles on AA of by Elrick Davis.

November/December 1939 – Akron group withdrawals from association with Oxford Group. Meetings moved from T. Henry & Clarence Williams to Dr. Bob and other members' homes.

November 13, 1939 – Bill wants to go to work at Towns Hosp, NY. Drunks want him to stay on as head of the movement.

November 21, 1939 – AA's in San Francisco hold 1st California AA meeting in the Clift Hotel.

November 26, 1939 – Dilworth Lupton gave sermon "Mr. X and Alcoholics Anonymous". It becomes one of first pamphlets on AA.

November 28, 1939 – Hank P. writes Bill advocating autonomy for all AA groups.

December 1939 – First AA group in mental institution, Rockland State Hospital, NY.

December 1939 – 1st home meeting in Los Angeles at Kaye M.'s house.

December 1939 – Matt Talbot Club has 88 members, uses wagons to collect old furniture to recondition & sell, not AA, uses AA program material, marked 1st effort reach alcoholics outside married middle-class category.

December 6, 1939 – Bert the Tailor lends Works Publishing \$1000.

January 4, 1940 – 1st AA group formed in Detroit, Michigan.

January 10, 1940 – 1st AA meeting not in a home meets at King School, Akron, Ohio.

February 1940 – 1st AA clubhouse opens at 334-1/2 West 24th Street, NYC.

February 8, 1940 – Rockefeller dinner.

February 8, 1940 – Houston Press runs first of six anonymous articles on AA by Larry J.

February 28, 1940 – First organization meeting of Philadelphia AA is held at McCreedy Huston's room at 2209 Delancy Street.

March 1940 – Mort J. comes to LA from Denver; starts custom of reading Chapter 5 Big Book at Cecil group.

March 7, 1940 – Bill and Lois visits the Philadelphia AA group. Any drunk who wants to get well was more than welcome at the AA meeting at 115 Newbury St., at 8 PM Wednesdays.

March 16, 1940 – Alcoholic Foundation & Works Publishing move from Newark to 30 Vesey St. in lower Manhattan. First headquarters of our own.

April 1, 1940 – Larry J. of Houston, writes "The Texas Prayer", used to open AA meetings in Texas.

April 16, 1940 – A sober Rollie H. catches the only opening day no-hitter in baseball history since 1909.

April 19, 1940 – The first AA group in Little Rock, Arkansas, is formed. First 'mail order' group.

April 22, 1940 – Bill and Hank transfer their Works Publishing stock to the Alcoholic Foundation.

April 23, 1940 – Dr. Bob writes the Trustees to refuse Big Book royalties, but Bill W. insists that Dr. Bob and Anne receive them.

April 24, 1940 – The first AA pamphlet, "AA", is published.

May 1, 1940 – Rollie H., Cleveland Indians, first anonymity break on national level.

May 4, 1940 – Sunday Star reports founding of first AA group in Washington, DC.

June 5, 1940 – Ebby Thatcher takes a job at the NY World's Fair.

June 6, 1940 – The first AA Group in Richmond, VA, is formed.

June 15, 1940 – First AA Group in Baltimore, MD, is formed.

June 18, 1940 – One hundred attends the first meeting in the first AA clubhouse at 334-1/2 West 24th St., New York City.

July 7, 1940 – Bill attends 1st Summer Session at School of Alcohol Studies at Yale University.

July 8, 1940 – 1st AA Group is formed in Dayton, Ohio.

July 23, 1940 – Philly AAs send 10% of kitty to Alcoholic Foundation, sets precedent.

September, 1940 – AA group is started in Toledo by Duke P. & others.

September, 1940 – Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases gives Big Book unfavorable review.

September 24, 1940 – Bill 12th steps Bobbie V., who later replaced Ruth Hock as his secretary in NY.

November 10, 1940 – 1st AA group is formed in Minneapolis.

November 12, 1940 – 1st AA meeting is held in Boston.

November 14, 1940 – Alcoholic Foundation publishes 1st AA Bulletin.

December 1940 – 1st AA group is formed in St. Louis, Missouri.

December 1940 – Group is started in Ashtabula, Ohio due to Plain Dealer articles. AA Cleveland has about 30 groups.

December 1, 1940 – Chicago Daily Tribune begins a series of articles on AA by Nall Hamilton.

February 15, 1941 – Baltimore Sunday Sun reports that the city's first AA group, begun in June 1940, has grown from 3 to 40 members.

February 20, 1941 – The Toledo Blade publishes first of three articles on AA by Seymour Rothman.

March 1941 – Second printing of Big Book.

March 1941 – 1st Prison AA Group is formed at San Quentin.

March 1, 1941 – Jack Alexander's Saturday Evening Post article is published and membership jumps from 2,000 to 8,000 by years end.

March 7, 1941 – Boston newspaper reports that any drunk who wanted can attend that city's first AA meeting.

March 9, 1941 – Wichita Beacon reports AA member from NY who wants to form a group in Wichita.

March 15, 1941 – 1st AA group is formed in New Haven, Connecticut. Not reported in paper until Oct 1, 1941.

April 3, 1941 – First AA meeting is held in Florida.

April 7, 1941 – Ruth Hock reports there are 1,500 letters asking for help as a result of the Saturday Evening Post Article by Jack Alexander.

April 11, 1941 – Bill and Lois finally find a home, Stepping Stones in New Bedford.

April 19, 1941 – The first AA group in the State of Washington is formed in Seattle.

May 1, 1941 – The first Wisconsin AA meeting is held at a hotel in Milwaukee.

May 2, 1941 – Jacksonville, FL newspaper reports the start of an AA group in Jacksonville.

May 3, 1941 – The first AA group in New Orleans, Louisiana, is formed (sometimes dated as May 2, 1943).

May 3, 1941 – Democrat Chronicle in Rochester, NY, reports first annual AA dinner at Seneca hotel with 60 attending.

May 16, 1941 – Ruth Hock finds that Joe Worth (former publisher of the New Yorker) is credited in Hank Parkhurst's diaries with coming up with the name Alcoholics Anonymous, has a "wet brain".

June 7, 1941 – The first AA Group in St. Paul, Minnesota, is formed.

June 8, 1941 – Three AAs start a group in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

June 30, 1941 – Ruth Hock shows Bill Wilson the Serenity Prayer and it is adopted readily by AA.

July 10, 1941 – Texas newspaper publishes anonymous letter from founding member of Texas AA Group. (Larry J)

July 20, 1941 – First AA group is formed in Seattle, Washington.

August 1941 – 1st meeting in Orange County, California is held in Anaheim.

August 19, 1941 – 1st AA Meeting in Colorado is held in Denver.

September 13, 1941 – WHJP in Jacksonville, FL airs Spotlight on AA.

October 1, 1941 – Local news reports 1st AA Group in New Haven, CT.

October 6, 1941 – 900 dine at Cleveland dinner for Dr. Bob.

November 1941 – "First Mass AA Meeting" in Oklahoma City, 8 present.

December 11, 1941 – Dallas Morning News reports 1st AA group is formed in Dallas.

February 1 or 2, 1942 – Ruth Hock, AA's 1st paid secretary, resigns to get married.

May 17, 1942 – *The Dayton Journal Herald* publishes pictures of AA members wearing masks to protect their anonymity.

May 17, 1942 – New Haven, CT paper has article on AA. Picture shows faces of members sitting in a circle.

June 17, 1942 – New York AA groups sponsors the first annual NY area meeting. Four hundred and twenty-four hear Dr. Silkworth and AA speakers.

June 19, 1942 – Columnist Earl Wilson reports that NYC Police Chief Valentine sent six policemen to AA and they sobered up. "There are fewer suicides in my files," he comments.

October 1942 – 1st issue of Cleveland Central Bulletin is published.

January 1, 1943 – Columbus Dispatch reports 1st Anniversary of Columbus, Ohio Central Group.

January 19, 1943 – 1st discussion for starting AA group in Toronto.

February 18, 1943 – During gas rationing in WWII, AAs are granted the right to use cars for 12th step work in emergency cases.

March 29, 1943 – *The Charleston Mail*, WV, reports on Bill W.'s talk at St. John's Parish House.

May 8, 1943 – Akron AA Group celebrates 8th anniversary with 500 present and sober.

July 23, 1943 – New Haven CT Register reports arrival of AAs to study with E. M. Jellinek.

July 24, 1943 – LA press reports formation of all-Mexican AA Group.

August 1, 1943 – Washington Times-Herald (DC) reports on AA clubhouse; to protect anonymity withholds address.

August 9, 1943 – LA groups announce 1000 members in 11 groups.

October 10, 1943 – 6 of 1st 9 AA's attend clubhouse anniversary in Toledo.

October 24, 1943 – Wilson starts 1st major AA tour, returns Jan 19, 1944.

November 28, 1943 – Bill guest speaker at San Quentin Penitentiary (sometimes dated Dec 2, 1943).

January 1944 – Dr. Harry Tiebout's first paper on the subject of Alcoholics Anonymous.

January 19, 1944 – Wilson's returns from 1st major AA tour started in Oct 24 1943.

March 10, 1944 – New York Intergroup is established.

July 1944 – Bob writes article for Grapevine "On Cultivating Tolerance".

June 21, 1944 – The first Issue of the AA Grapevine is published.

October 1944 – First non-American branch started in Sydney, Australia by Father T. V. Dunlea & Rex.

October 2, 1944 – Marty M. founded National Committee Education Alcoholism, later becomes National Council on Alcoholism.

January 15, 1945 – First AA meeting is held in Springfield, Missouri.

January 24, 1945 – 1st black group St. Louis.

March 5, 1945 – Time Magazine reports Detroit radio broadcasts of AA members (Archie T.).

June 11, 1945 – 2500 attend AA's 10th Anniversary in Cleveland, Ohio.

June 13, 1945 – Morgan R. gives a radio appearance for AA with large audience. He is kept under surveillance to make sure he doesn't drink.

October 3, 1945 – AA Grapevine is adopted as national publication of AA.

November 1945 – Bill's article called 'Those Goof Balls' is published in Grapevine.

December 20, 1945 – Rowland H. dies (he carried the Oxford Group message to Ebby).

January 1946 – Readers Digest does a story on AA.

March 1946 – The March of Time film is produced by NY AA office.

May 6, 1946 – The long form of the "Twelve Traditions" is published in the AA Grapevine.

September, 1946 – Bill & Dr. Bob both publicly endorse National Committee Education Alcoholism founded by Marty M.

September, 1946 – 1st AA group in Mexico.

November 18, 1946 – 1st Dublin Ireland group meets.

March 31, 1947 – 1st AA group is formed in London, England.

September 18, 1947 – Dallas Central Office opens its doors.

October 13, 1947 – "The Melbourne Group" holds its first meeting in Australia.

November 1, 1947 – 1st AA Group in Anchorage, Alaska.

January 1948 – 1st AA meeting in Japan.

June, 1948 – A subscription to the AA Grapevine is donated to the Beloit, Wisconsin Public Library by a local AA member.

September, 1948 – Bob writes article for Grapevine on AA "Fundamentals – In Retrospect".

December 1948 – Dr. Bob's last major talk, in Detroit.

March 1949 – Dr. Bob considers idea of AA conference premature.

March 11, 1949 – The Calix Society, an association of Roman Catholic alcoholics who are maintaining their sobriety through participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, is formed in Minneapolis by five Catholic AA members.

May 1949 – The first AA meetings in Scotland are held in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

June 1, 1949 – Anne Smith, Dr. Bob's wife, dies.

September, 1949 – 1st issue of Grapevine is published in "pocketbook" size.

November 15, 1949 – Bill W. suggests that groups devote Thanksgiving week to discussions of the 12 Traditions.

December 7, 1949 – Sister Ignatia receives Poverello Medal on behalf of AA.

April 1950 – Saturday Evening Post article "The Drunkard's Best Friend" by Jack Alexander.

May 1950 – Nell Wing becomes Bill W.'s secretary.

May 1951 – Al-Anon is founded by Lois W. and Anne B.

May 18, 1950 – Dr. Bob tells Bill "I reckon we ought to be buried like other folks" after hearing that local AAs want a huge memorial.

July 28-30, 1950 – First AA International Convention is held in Cleveland, Ohio. Twelve Traditions are adopted. Dr. Bob makes last appearance at large AA gathering.

November 16, 1950 – Dr. Bob dies.

December 1950 – Grapevine article signed by both Bill and Dr. Bob recommend establishing AA General Service Conference.

January 1951 – AA Grapevine publishes memorial issue for Dr. Bob.

February 1951 – Fortune magazine article about AA New York reprints in pamphlet form for many years.

March 1951 – American Weekly publishes memorial article for Dr. Bob.

March 22, 1951 – Dr. William Duncan Silkworth dies at Towns Hospital.

April 25, 1951 – AA's first General Service Conference is held.

October 1951 – Lasker Award is given to AA by American Public Health Association.

October 1951 – Sister Ignatia writes "Care of Alcoholics – St. Thomas Hospital & AA Started Movement Which Swept Country" article in "Hospital Progress," the journal of Catholic Hospital Association. In October 1954 – The "Alcoholic Foundation" is renamed the "General Service Board of AA"

November 21, 1952 – Willard Richardson, past Treasurer/Chairman of Alcoholic Foundation, dies.

January 21, 1954 – Hank P. who helped Bill start NY office dies in Pennington, New Jersey.

August 3, 1954 – Brinkley S. gets sober at Towns Hosp after 50th detox.

August 28, 1954 – "24 Hours a Day" is published by Richmond W.

September 17, 1954 – Bill D., AA #3 dies.

July 2-3, 1955 – 20th Anniversary Convention at St. Louis, MO. The Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service, is turned over to the movement by the old-timers. AA comes of Age.

October 1, 1957 – Book "AA Comes of Age" is published.

January 1958 – Bill writes article for Grapevine on "Emotional Sobriety".

April 1958 – The word "honest" is dropped from AA Preamble, "an honest desire to stop drinking".

February 23, 1959 – AA is granted "Recording for the Blind" permission to tape the Big Book.

April 3, 1960 – Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J., dies. He was Bill W's "spiritual sponsor."

July 1-3, 1960 – 25th Anniversary of AA in Long Beach, CA.

July 11, 1960 – Time publishes article called "Passionately Anonymous" on the 25th Convention.

January 30, 1961 – Dr. Carl Jung answers Bill's letter with "Spiritus Contra Spiritum".

September, 1962 – 1st appearance of Victor E. in Grapevine.

February 1963 – Harpers carries article critical of AA.

November 1, 1963 – Reverend Sam Shoemaker dies.

July 2, 1965 – "Best of Bill" and Pocket-Sized "12 and 12" is first sold.

July 2, 1965 – 1st "La Vigne", Canadian Grapevine, is published.

July 2-4, 1965 – 30th Anniversary of AA in Toronto. Adopts "I Am Responsible."

July 16, 1965 – Frank Amos, AA Non-Alcoholic Trustee, dies.

September 19, 1965 – The Saturday Evening Post publishes article "Alcoholics Can Be Cured – Despite AA".

March 21 1966 – Ebby dies.

April 1966 – Change in ratio of trustees of the General Service Board; now two-thirds (majority) are alcoholic.

April 1, 1966 – Sister Ignatia dies.

April 2, 1966 – Dr. Harry Tiebout dies.

November 9, 1966 – President Johnson appoints Marty M. to the 1st National Advisory Committee on Alcoholism.

February 19, 1967 – Father "John Doe" (Ralph P.), 1st Catholic Priest in AA dies.

October, 9-11, 1969 – 1st World Service meeting is held in New York with delegates from 14 countries.

April 1970 – GSO is moved to 468 Park Ave. South, NYC.

July 3-5, 1970 – 35th Anniversary of AA in Miami. "Declaration of Unity". Bill's last public appearance.

October 10, 1970 – Lois reads "Bills Last Message" at annual dinner in NY.

January 24, 1971 – Bill W. dies at Miami Beach, FL.

January 26, 1971 – New York Times publishes Bill's obituary on page 1.

February 14, 1971 – AA groups worldwide hold memorial service for Bill W.

May 8, 1971 – Bill W. is buried in private ceremony, East Dorset, Vermont.

July 31, 1972 – Rollie H. dies sober in Washington DC.

October 5-7, 1972 – 2nd World Service meeting is held in New York.

April 16, 1973 – Dr. Jack Norris presents President Nixon with the one millionth copy of the Big Book.

October 24, 1973 – *Trustee's Archives Committee of AA at its first meeting*

May 28, 1974 – *The first World Service Meeting of AA outside North America is held in London.*

July 4-6, 1975 – *40th Anniversary of AA in Denver. World's largest coffee server serves half million cups a day.*

September 19, 1975 – *Jack Alexander, author of original Saturday Evening Post article, dies.*

December 10, 1975 – *Birds of a Feather AA group for pilots is formed.*

June 6, 1979 – *AA gives the two millionth copy of the Big Book to Joseph Califano, then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. It is presented by Lois Wilson, Bill's wife, in New York.*

December 6, 1979 – *Akron Beacon reports death of Henrietta Sieberling.*

May 29, 1980 – *"Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers" is published.*

July 3-6, 1980 – *45th Anniversary of AA in New Orleans. First true marathon meeting is held.*

July 3-6, 1980 – *Gay AAs have own program at 40th AA Anniversary in New Orleans.*

July 22, 1980 – *Marty M. early AA woman and founder of NCADD dies.*

August 1981 – *Distribution of Alcoholics Anonymous passes 3 million.*

December 1982 – *Nell Wing retires from GSO after 35 years of service.*

March 22, 1984 – *Clarence S., "Home Brewmeister", dies.*

December 5, 1985 – *Dave B., founder of Montreal Group dies weeks before 50th anniversary. His story is added to the 4th Edition Big Book.*

January 23, 1985 – *Bob B. dies sober November 11, 2001.*

July 5-7, 1985 – *50th AA Anniversary in Montreal, Canada. Ruth Hock is given 5,000,000th Big Book. House of Seagrams flies their flags at half-mast for 3 days.*

January 13, 1988 – *Dr. Jack Norris Chairman/Trustee of AA for 27 years dies.*

August 18, 1988 – *1st Canadian National AA Convention in Halifax, Nova Scotia.*

October 5, 1988 – *Lois Burnam Wilson dies.*

October 8, 1988 – *Memorial Service for Lois W. at Stepping Stones, NY.*

October 10, 1988 – *Lois is buried next to Bill in Manchester, Vermont.*

April 30, 1989 – *Film "My Name is Bill W." a Hallmark presentation is broadcast on ABC TV.*

July 5-8, 1990 – *55th AA Anniversary in Seattle, WA. Nell Wing given 10,000,000th Big Book.*

July 2, 1993 – *50 years of AA is celebrated in Canada.*

Oct 28, 1994 – *National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence celebrates 50 years.*

January 19, 1999 – *Frank M., AA Archivist since 1983, dies peacefully in his sleep.*

February 14, 2000 – *William Y., "California Bill" dies in Winston Salem, NC.*

May 19, 2000 – *Dr. Paul O., Big Book story "Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict" (renamed "Acceptance Was the Answer" in the 4th edition) dies at the age of 83.*

June, 2000 – *More than 47,000 from 87 countries attend the opening meeting of the 65th AA Anniversary in Minneapolis, MN.*

July 2, 2000 – *20 millionth copy of Big Book is given to Al-Anon in Minneapolis, MN.*

January 5, 2001 – *Chuck C. from Houston dies sober in Texas at 38 years sober.*

September 11, 2001 – *30 Vesey St, New York, location of AA's first office is destroyed during the World Trade Center attack.*

Fort Worth, Texas, 6/12/54

How the Big Book Was Put Together

A TALK BY BILL WILSON

I think I'm on the bill for tonight's show with a talk on the 12 Traditions of AA. But you know drunks, like women, have the prerogative, or at least seize the prerogative of changing their minds - I'm not going to make any such damn talk! For something very festive I think the Traditions 1-12 would be a little too grim, might bore you a little. As a matter of fact, speaking of Traditions, when they were first written back there in 1945 or 1946 as tentative guides to help us hang together and function, nobody paid any attention except a few "againers" who wrote me and asked what the hell are they about?

Nobody paid the slightest attention. But, little by little as these Traditions got around we had our clubhouse squabbles, our little rifts, this difficulty and that, it was found that the Traditions indeed did reflect experience and were guiding principles. So, they took hold a little more and a little more and a little more so that today the average AA coming in the door learns at once what they're about, about what kind of an outfit he really has landed in and by what principles his group and AA as a whole are governed. But, as I say, the dickens with all that. I would like to just spin some yarn and they will be a series of yarns which cluster around the preparation of the good old

AA bible and when I hear that it always makes me shudder because the guys who put it together weren't a damn bit biblical. I think sometimes some of the drunks have an idea that these old

timers went around with almost visible halos and long gowns and they were full of sweetness and light. Oh boy, how inspired they were, oh yes. But wait till I tell you. I suppose the book yarn really started in the living room of Doc and Annie Smith.

As you know, I landed there in the summer of '35, a little group caught hold. I helped Smithy briefly with it and he went on to found the first AA group in the world. And, as with all new groups, it was nearly all failure, but now and then, somebody saw the light and there was progress. Pampered, I got back to New York, a little more experienced group started there, and by the time we got around to 1937, this thing had leaped over into Cleveland, and began to move south from New York. But, it was still, we thought in those years, flying blind, a flickering candle indeed, that might at any moment be snuffed out. So, on this late fall afternoon in 1937, Smithy and I were talking together in his living room, Anne sitting there, when we began to count noses. How many people had stayed dry; in Akron, in New York, maybe a few in Cleveland? How many had stayed dry and for how long? And when we added up the total, it sure was a handful of, I don't know, 35 to 40 maybe. But enough time had elapsed on enough really fatal cases of alcoholism, so that we grasped the importance of these small statistics. Bob and I saw for the first time that this thing was going to succeed. That God in his providence and mercy had thrown a new light into the dark caves

where we and our kind had been and were still by the millions dwelling. I can never forget the elation and ecstasy that seized us both. And when we sat happily taking and reflecting, we reflected, that well, a couple of score of drunks were sober but this had taken three long years. There had been an immense amount of failure and a long time had been taken just to sober up the handful. How could this handful carry its' message to all those who still didn't know? Not all the drunks in the world could come to Akron or New York. But how could we transmit our message to them, and by what means? Maybe we could go to the old timers in each group, but that meant nearly everybody, to find the sum of money - somebody else's money, of course and say to them "Well now, take a sabbatical year off your job if you have one, and you go to Kentucky, Omaha, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles and where ever it may be and you give this thing a year and get a group started."

It had already become evident by then that we were just about to be moved out of the City Hospital in Akron to make room for people with broken legs and ailing livers; that the hospitals were not too happy with us. We tried to run their business perhaps too much, and besides, drunks were apt to be noisy in the night and there were other inconveniences, which were all tremendous. So, it was obvious that because of drunks being such unlovely creatures, we would have to have a great chain of hospitals. And as that dream burst upon me, it sounded good, because you see, I'd been down in Wall Street in the promotion business and I remember the great sums of money that were made as soon as people got this chain idea. You know, chain drug stores, chain grocery stores, chain dry good stores. That evening Bob and I told them that we were within sight of success and that we thought this thing might go on and on and on, that a new light indeed was shining in our dark world. But how could this

light be a reflection and transmitted without being distorted and garbled? At this point, they turned the meeting over to me, and being a salesman, I set right to work on the drunk tanks and subsidies for the missionaries, I was pretty poor then.

We touched on the book. The group conscience consisted of 18 men good and true ... and the good and true men, you could see right away, were dammed skeptical about it all. Almost with one voice, they chorused "let's keep it simple, this is going to bring money into this thing, this is going to create a professional class. We'll all be ruined." "Well," I countered, "That's a pretty good argument. Lots to what you say ... but even within gunshot of this very house, alcoholics are dying like flies. And if this thing doesn't move any faster than it has in the last three years, it may be another 10 before it gets to the outskirts of Akron. How in God's name are we going to carry this message to others? We've got to take some kind of chance. We can't keep it so simple it becomes anarchy and gets complicated. We can't keep it so simple that it won't propagate itself, and we've got to have a lot of money to do these things." So, exerting myself to the utmost, which was considerable in those days, we finally got a vote in that little meeting and it was a mighty close vote by just a majority of maybe 2 or 3. The meeting said with some reluctance, "Well Bill, if we need a lot of dough, you better go back to New York where there's plenty of it and you raise it." Well, boy, that was the word that I'd been waiting for. So I scrambled back to the great city and I began to approach some people of means describing this tremendous thing that had happened. And it didn't seem so tremendous to the people of means at all. What? 35 or 40 drunks sober up? They have sobered them up before now, you know. And besides, Mr. Wilson, don't you think it's kind of sweeping up the shavings? I mean, wouldn't this be something for the Red Cross be better?

In other words, with all of my ardent solicitations, I got one hell of a freeze from the gentlemen of wealth. Well, I began to get blue and when I begin to get blue my stomach kicks up as well as other things.

I was lying in the bed one night with an imaginary ulcer attack (this used to happen all the time - I had one the time the 12 steps were written) and I said, "My God, we're starving to death here on Clinton Street." By this time the house was full of drunks. They were eating us out of house and home. In those days we never believed in charging anybody anything - so Lois was earning the money, I was being

the missionary and the drunks were eating the meals. "This can't go on. We've got to have those drunk tanks, we've got to have those missionaries, and we've got to have a book. That's for sure."

The next morning I crawled into my clothes and I called on my brother-in-law. He's a doctor and he is about the last person who followed my trip way down. The only one, save of course, the Lord. "Well," I said, "I'll go up and see Leonard." So I went up to see my brother-in-law Leonard and he pried out a little time between patients coming in there. I started my awful bellyache about these rich guys who wouldn't give us any dough for this great and glorious enterprise.

It seemed to me he knew a girl and I think she had an uncle that somehow tied up with the Rockefeller offices. I asked him to call and see if there was such a man and if there was, would he see us. On what slender threads our destiny sometimes hangs. So, the call was made. Instantly there came onto the other end of the wire the voice of dear Willard Richardson - one of the loveliest Christian gentlemen I have ever known. And the moment he recognized my brother-in-law he said, "Why Leonard, where have you been all these years?" "Well, my brother-in-law, unlike me, is a man of very few words, so he quickly said to dear old Uncle Willard, he had a brother-in-law

who had apparently some success sobering up drunks and could the two of us come over there and see him. "Why certainly," said dear Willard. "Come right over." So we go over to Rockefeller Plaza. We go up that elevator - 54 flights or 56 I guess it was, and we walk promptly into Mr. Rockefeller's personal offices, and ask to see Mr. Richardson. Here sits this lovely, benign old gentleman, who nevertheless had a kind of shrewd twinkle in his eye. So I sat down and told him about our exciting discovery, this terrific cure for alcoholics that had just hit the world, how it worked and what we have done for them. And, boy, this was the first receptive man with money or access to money - remember we were in Mr. Rockefeller's personal offices at this point - and by now, we had learned that this was Mr. Rockefeller's closest personal friend. So he said, "I'm very interested. Would you like to have lunch with me, Mr. Wilson?" Well, now you know, for a rising promoter, that sounded pretty good - going to have lunch with the best friends of John D. Things were looking up. My ulcer attack disappeared. So I had lunch with the old gentleman and we went over this thing again and again and, boy, he's so warm and kindly and friendly. Right at the close of the lunch he said, "Well now Mr. Wilson or Bill, if I can call you that, wouldn't you like to have a luncheon meeting with some of my friends? There's Frank Amos, he's in the advertising business but he was on a committee that recommended that Mr. Rockefeller drop the prohibition business. And there's Leroy Chipman, he looks after Mr. Rockefeller real estate. And there's Mr. Scotty, Chairman of the Board of the Riverside Church and a number of other people like that. I believe they'd like to hear this story." So a meeting was arranged and it fell upon a winter's night in 1937. And the meeting was held at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. We called in, posthaste, a couple of drunks from Akron - Smithy included, of course - heading the procession. I came in with

the New York contingent of four or five. And to our astonishment we were ushered into Mr., Rockefeller's personal boardroom right next to his office. I thought to myself "Well, now this is really getting hot." And indeed I felt very much warmed when I was told by Mr. Richardson that I was sitting in a chair just vacated by Mr. Rockefeller. I said "Well, now, we really are getting close to the bankroll." Old Doc Silkworth was there that night too, and he testified what he had seen happen to these new friends of ours, and each drunk, thinking of nothing better to say, told their stories of drinking and recovering and these folk listened. They seemed very definitely impressed. I could see that the moment for the big touch was coming. So, I gingerly brought up the subject of the drunk tanks, the subsidized missionaries, and the big question of a book or literature.

Well, God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform. It didn't look like a wonder to me when Mr. Scott, head of a large engineering firm and Chairman of the Riverside Church, looked at us and said "Gentlemen, up to this point, this has been the work of goodwill only. No plan, no property, no paid people, just one carrying the good news to the next. Isn't that true? And may it not be that that is where the great power of this society lies? Now, if we subsidize it, might it not alter its' whole character? We want to do all we can, we're gathered for that, but would it be wise?" Well then, the salesmen all gave Mr. Scott the rush and we said, "Why, Mr. Scott, there're only 40 of us. It's taken 3 years. Why millions, Mr. Scott, will rot before this thing ever gets to them unless we have money and lots of it." And we made our case at last with these gentlemen for the missionaries, the drunk tanks and the book. So one of them volunteered to investigate us very carefully, and since poor old Dr. Bob was harder up than I was, and since the first group and the reciprocal community was in Akron, we directed their attention out there. Frank Amos, still a trustee in

the Foundation, at his own expense, got on a train, went out to Akron and made all sorts of preliminary inquiries around town about Dr. Bob. All the reports were good except that he was a drunk that recently got sober. He visited the little meeting out there. He went to the Smith house and he came back with what he thought was a very modest proposal. He recommended to these friends of ours that we should have at least a token amount of money at first, say \$50,000, something like that. That would clear up the mortgage on Smith's place. It would get us a little rehabilitation place. We could put Dr. Smith in charge. We could subsidize a few of these people briefly, until we got some more money. We could start the chain of hospitals. We'd have a few missionaries. We could get busy on the book, all for a mere \$50,000 bucks. Well, considering the kind of money we were backed up against, that did sound a little small, but, you know, one thing leads to another and it sounded real good. We were real glad. Mr. Willard Richardson, our original contact, then took that report into John D. Jr. as everybody recalls. And I've since heard what went on in there. Mr. Rockefeller read the report, called Willard Richardson and thanked him and said: "Somehow I am strangely stirred by all this. This interests me immensely." And then looking at his friend Willard, he said, "But isn't money going to spoil this thing? I'm terribly afraid that it would. And yet I am so strangely stirred by it."

Then came another turning point in our destiny. When that man whose business is giving away money said to Willard Richardson, "No," he said, I won't be the one to spoil this thing with money. You say these two men who are heading it are a little 'stressed', I'll put \$5,000 dollars in the Riverside Church treasury. Those folks can form themselves into a committee and draw on it, as they like. I want to hear what goes on. But, please don't ask me for any more money." Well, with 50 thousand that then was shrunk to five, we raised

the mortgage on Smithy's house for about three grand. That left two and Smith and I commenced chewing on that too. Well, that was a long way from a string of drunk tanks and books. What in thunder would we do? Well, we had more meetings with our newfound friends, Amos, Richardson, Scott, Chipman and those fellows who stuck with us to this day, some of them now gone. And, in spite of Mr. Rockefeller's advice, we again convinced these folks that this thing needed a lot of money. What could we do without it? So, one of them proposed, "Well, why don't we form a foundation, something like the Rockefeller Foundation?" I said, "I hope it will be like that with respect to money." And then one of them got a free lawyer from a firm who was interested in the thing. And we all asked him to draw up an agreement of trust, a charter for something to be called the Alcoholic Foundation. Why we picked that one, I don't know. I don't know whether the Foundation was alcoholic, it was the Alcoholic Foundation, not the Alcoholics Foundation. And the lawyer was very much confused because in the meeting, which formed the Foundation, we made it very plain that we did not wish to be in the majority. We felt

that there should be non-alcoholics on the board and they ought to be in a majority of one. "Well, indeed," said the lawyer, "What is the difference between an alcoholic and a non-alcoholic?" And one of our smart drunks said, "That's a cinch, a non-alcoholic is a guy who can drink and an alcoholic is a guy who can't drink." "Well," said the lawyer, "how do we state that legally?" We didn't know. So at length, we have a foundation and a board which I think then was about seven, consisting of four of these new friends, including my brother-in-law, Mr. Richardson, Chipman, Amos and some of us drunks. I think Smithy went on the board but I kind of coyly stayed off it thinking it would be more convenient later on.

So we had this wonderful new foundation. These friends, unlike Mr. Rockefeller, were sold on the idea that we needed a lot of dough, and so our salesmen around New York started to solicit some money, again, from the very rich. We had a list of them and we had credentials from friends of Mr. John D. Rockefeller. "How could you miss, I ask you, salesmen?" The Foundation had been formed in the spring of 1938 and all summer we solicited the rich. Well, they were either in Florida or they preferred the Red Cross, or some of them thought that drunks were disgusting and we didn't get one damn cent in the whole summer of 1938, praise God! Well, meantime, we began to hold trustee meetings and they were commiseration sessions on getting no dough. What with the mortgage and with me and Smithy eating away at it, the five grand had gone up with the flu, and we were all stone-broke again. Smithy couldn't get his practice back either because he was a surgeon and nobody likes to be carved up by an alcoholic surgeon - even if he was three years sober. So things were tough all around, no fooling. Well, what would we do?

One day, probably in August 1938, I produced at a Foundation meeting, a couple of chapters of a proposed book along with some recommendations of a couple of doctors down at John Hopkins to try to put the bite on the rich. And we still had these two book chapters kicking around. Frank Amos said, "Well now, I know the religious editor down there at Harpers, an old friend of mine, Gene Exman." He said, "Why don't you take these two book chapters, your story and the introduction to the book, down there and show them to Gene and see what he thinks about them." So I took the chapters down. To my great surprise, Gene who was to become a great friend of ours, looked at the chapters and said, "Why Mr. Wilson, could you write a whole book like this?" "Well, I said, "Sure, sure." There was more talk about it. I guess he went in and showed it to Mr.

Canfield, the big boss, and another meeting was had. The upshot was that Harpers intimated that they would pay me as the budding author, 15 hundred in advance royalties, bringing enough money in to enable me to finish the book. I felt awful good about that. It made me feel like I was an author or something. I felt real good about it but after a while, not so good. Because I began to reason, and so did the other boys, if this guy Wilson eats up the 15 hundred bucks while he's doing this book, after the book gets out, it will take a long time to catch up. And if this thing gets him publicity, what are we going to do with the inquiries? And, after all, what's a lousy 10% royalty anyway? The 15 hundred still looked pretty big to me. Then we thought too, now here's a fine publisher like Harpers, but if this book if and when done, should prove to be the main textbook for AA, why would we want our main means of propagation in the hands of somebody else? Shouldn't we control this thing? At this point, the book project really began.

I had a guy helping me on this thing who had red hair and ten times my energy and he was some promoter. He said, "Bill, this is something, come on with me." We walk into a stationary store, we buy a pad of blank stock certificates and we write across the top of them 'Works Publishing Company'- Par Value 25 Dollars. So we take the pad of these stock certificates, (of course we didn't bother to incorporate it, that didn't happen for several more years) we took this pad of stock certificates to the first AA meeting where you shouldn't mix money with spirituality. We said to the drunks "look, this thing is gonna be a cinch. Parker will take a third of this thing for services rendered. I, the author will take a third for services rendered, and you can have a third of these stock certificates par 25 if you'll just start paying up on your stock. If you only want one share, it's only five dollars a month, 5 months, see?" And the drunks all gave us this stony look

that said, "What the hell, you mean to say you're only asking us to buy stock in a book that you ain't written yet?" "Why sure," we said "If Harpers will put money in this thing why shouldn't you? Harpers said it's gonna be a good book." But the drunks still gave us this stony stare. We had to think up some more arguments. "We've been looking at pricing costs of the books, boys. We get a book here, ya know, 400 or 450 pages, it ought to sell for about \$3.50." Now back in those days we found on inquiry from the printers that that \$3.50 book could be printed for 35 cents making a 1,000% profit, of course, we didn't mention the other expenses, just the printing costs. "So boys, just think on it, when these books move out by the carload we will be printing them for 35 cents and we'll be selling them direct mail for \$3.50. How can you lose?" The drunks still gave us this stony stare. No salt. Well, we figured we had to have a better argument than that. Harpers said it was a good book, you can print them for 35~ and sell them for \$3.50, but how are we going to convince the drunks that we could move carload lots of them? Millions of dollars.

So we get the idea we'll go up to the Readers Digest, and we got an appointment with Mr. Kenneth Paine, the managing editor there. Gee, I never forget the day we got off the train up at Pleasantville and were ushered into his office. We excitedly told him the story of this wonderful budding society. We dwelled upon the friendship of Mr. Rockefeller and Harry Emerson Fosdick. You know we were traveling in good company with Paine. The society, by the way, was about to publish a textbook, then in the process of being written and we were wondering, Mr. Paine, if this wouldn't be a matter of tremendous interest to the Reader's Digest? Having in mind of course that the Reader's Digest has a circulation of 12 million readers and if we could only get a free ad of this coming book in the Digest we really would move something, ya see?

"Well," Mr. Paine said, "this sounds extremely interesting, I like this idea, why I think it'll be an absolutely ideal piece for the Digest. How soon do you think this new book will be out Mr. Wilson?" I said, "We've got a couple of chapters written, ahem, if we can get right at it, Mr. Paine, uh, you know, uh, probably uh, this being October, we ought to get this thing out by April or next May. "Why," Mr. Paine said, "I'm sure the Digest would like a thing like this. Mr. Wilson, I'll take it up with the editorial board, and when the time is right and you get already to shoot, come up and we'll put a special feature writer on this thing and we'll tell all about your society." And then my promoter friend said, "But Mr. Paine, will you mention the new book in the piece?" "Yes," said Mr. Paine, "we will mention the book." Well, that was all we needed, we went back to the drunks and said, "now look, boys, there are positively millions in this - how can you miss? Harpers says it's going to be a good book. We buy them for 35¢ from the printer, we sell them for \$3.50 and the Reader's Digest is going to give us a free add in its' piece and boys, those books will move out by the carload. How can you miss? And after all, we only need 4 or 5 thousand bucks."

So we began to sell the shares of Works Publishing, not yet incorporated, par value \$25 and at \$5 per month to the poor people. Some people bought as little as one and one guy bought 10 shares. We sold a few shares to non-alcoholics and my promoter friend who was

to get one-third interest was a very important man in this transaction because he went out and kept collecting the money from the drunks so that little Ruthie Hock and I could keep working on the book and Lois could have some groceries (even though she was still working in that department store).

So, the preparation started and some more chapters were done and we went to AA meetings in New York with these chapters in the rough. It

wasn't like chicken-in-the-rough; the boys didn't eat those chapters up at all. I suddenly discovered that I was in this terrific whirlpool of arguments. I was just the umpire - I finally had to stipulate. "Well boys, over here you got the Holly Rollers who say we need all the good old-fashioned stuff in the book, and over here you tell me we've got to have a psychological book, and that never cured anybody, and they didn't do very much with us in the missions, so I guess you will have to leave me just to be the umpire. I'll scribble out some roughs here and show them to you and let's get the comments in." So we fought, bled and died our way through one chapter after another. We sent them out to Akron and they were peddled around and there were terrific hassles about what should go in this book and what should not. Meanwhile, we set drunks up to write their stories or we had newspaper people to write the stories for them to go in the back of the book. We had an idea that we'd have a text and all and then we'd have stories all about the drunks who were staying sober.

Then came that night when we were up around Chapter 5. As you know I'd gone on about myself, which was natural after all. And then the little introductory chapter and we dealt with the agnostic and we described alcoholism, but, boy, we finally got to the point where we really had to say what the book was all about and how this deal works. As I told you this was a six-step program then. On this particular evening, I was lying in bed on Clinton Street wondering what the deuce this next chapter would be about. The idea came to me, well, we need a definite statement of concrete principles that these drunks can't wiggle out of. Can't be any wiggling out of this deal at all. And this six-step program had two big gaps in-between they'll wiggle out of. Moreover if this book goes out to distant readers, they have to have got to have an absolutely explicit program by which to go. This was while I was thinking these thoughts, while my imaginary ulcer was paining

me and while I was mad as hell at these drunks because the money was coming in too slow. Some had the stock and weren't paying up. A couple of guys came in and they gave me a big argument and we yelled and shouted and I finally went down and laid on the bed with my ulcer and I said, "poor me."

There was a pad of paper by the bed and I reached for that and said "you've got to break this program up into small pieces so they can't wiggle out. So I started writing, trying to bust it up into little pieces. And when I got the pieces set down on that piece of yellow paper, I put numbers on them and was rather agreeably surprised when it came out to twelve. I said, "That's a good significant figure in Christianity and mystic lore." Then I noticed that instead of leaving the God idea to the last, I'd got it up front but I didn't pay much attention to that, it looked pretty good. Well, the next meeting comes along; I'd gone on beyond the steps trying to amplify them in the rest of that chapter to the meeting and boy, pandemonium broke loose. "What do you mean by changing the program, what about this, what about that, this thing is overloaded with God. We don't like this, you've got these guys on their knees - stand them up!" A lot of these drunks are scared to death of being Godly, let's take God out of it entirely." Such were the arguments that we had. Out of that terrific hassle came the Twelve Steps. That argument caused the introduction of the phrase that has been a lifesaver to thousands; it was certainly none of my doing. I was on the pious side then, you see, still suffering from this big hot flash of mine. The idea of "God as you understand Him" came out of that perfectly ferocious argument and we put that in.

Well, little by little things ground on, little by little the drunks put in money and we kept an office open in Newark, which was the office of a defunct business where I tried to establish my friend. The money ran low at times and Ruthie

Hock worked for no pay. We gave her plenty of stock in the Works Publishing of course. All you had to do is tear it off the pay, par 25 have a week's salary, dear. So, we got around to about January 1939. Somebody said "hadn't we better test this thing out; hadn't we better make a pre-publication copy, a multilith or mimeographed copy of this text and a few of the personal stories that had come in - try it out on the preacher, on the doctor, the Catholic Committee on Publications, psychiatrists, policemen, fi shwives, housewives, drunks, everybody. Just to see if we've got anything that goes against the grain anyplace and also to find out if we can't get some better ideas here?" So at considerable expense, we got this pre-publication copy made; we peddled it around and comments came back, some of them very helpful. It went, among other places, to the Catholic Committee on Publications in New York and at that time we had only one Catholic member to take it there and he had just gotten out of the asylum and hadn't had anything to do with preparing the book.

The book passed inspection and the stories came in. Somehow we got them edited; somehow we got the galleys together. We got up to the printing time. Meanwhile, the drunks had been kind of slow on those subscription payments and a little further on I was able to go up to Charlie Towns where old Doc Silkworth held forth. Charlie believed in us so we put the slug on to Charlie for \$2,500 bucks. Charlie didn't want any stocks; he wanted a promissory note on the book not yet written. So, we got the \$2,500 from Charlie routed around through the Alcoholic Foundation so that it could be tax exempt. Also, we had blown \$6,000 in these 9 months in supporting the 3 of us in an office and the till was getting low. We still had to get this book printed. So, we go up to Cornwall Press, which is the largest printer in the world, where we'd made previous inquiries and we asked about printing and they said they'd be glad

to do it and how many books would we like? We said that was hard to estimate. Of course our membership is very small at the present time and we wouldn't sell many to the membership but after all, the Readers Digest is going to print a plug about it to its' 2 million readers. This book should go out in carloads when it's printed.

The printer was none other than dear old Mr. Blackwell, one of our Christian friends and Mr. Blackwell said, "How much of a down payment are you going to make? How many books would you like printed?" "Well," we said, "we'll be conservative, let's print 5,000 just to start with." Mr. Blackwell asked us what we were going to use for money. We said that we wouldn't need much; just a few hundred dollars on account would be all right. I told you; after all, we're traveling in very good company, friends of Mr. Rockefeller and all that.

So, Blackwell started printing the 5,000 books; the plates were made and the galleys were read. Gee, all of a sudden we thought of the Reader's Digest, so we go up to there, walk in on Mr. Kenneth Paine and say, "We're all ready to shoot." And Mr. Paine replies "Shoot what - Oh yes, I remember you two, Mr. Marcus and Mr. Wilson. You gentlemen were here last fall, I told you the Reader's Digest would be interested in this new work and in your book. Well, right after you were here, I consulted our editorial board and to my great surprise they didn't like the idea at all and I forgot to tell you!" Oh boy, we had the drunks with \$5,000 bucks in it, Charlie Towns hooked for \$2,500 bucks and \$2,500 on the cuff with the printer. There was \$500 left in the bank, what in the deuce would we do?

Morgan Ryan, the good-looking Irishman who had taken the book over to the Catholic Committee on Publication, had been in an earlier time a good ad man. He said that he knew Gabriel Heatter. "Gabriel is putting on these 3 minute heart to heart programs on the radio. I'll get an

interview with him and maybe he'll interview me on the radio about all this," said Ryan. So, our spirits rose once again. Then all of a sudden we had a big chill, suppose this Irishman got drunk before Heatter interviewed him? So, we went to see Heatter and lo and behold, Heatter said he would interview him and then we got still more scared. So, we rented a room in the downtown Athletic Club and we put Ryan in there with a day and night guard for ten days. Meanwhile, our spirits rose again. We could see those books just going out in carloads. Then my promoter friend said, "Look, there should be a follow-up on a big thing like this here interview. It'll be heard all over the country.... national network. I think folks that are the market for this book are the doctors, the physicians. I suggest that we pitch the last \$500 that we have in the treasury on a postal card shower, which will go to every physician east of the Rocky Mountains. On this postal card we'll say "Hear all about Alcoholics Anonymous on Gabriel Heatter's Program - spend \$3.50 for the book Alcoholics Anonymous, sure-cure for alcoholism." So, we spent the last \$500 on the postal card shower and mailed them out.

They managed to keep Ryan sober although he since hasn't made it. All the drunks had their ears glued to the radio. The group market in Alcoholics Anonymous was already saturated because you see, we had 49 stockholders and they'd all gotten a book free, then we had 28 guys with stories and they all got a free book. So we had run out of the AA books. But we could see the book moving out in carloads to these doctors and their patients. Sure enough, Ryan is interviewed. Heatter pulled out the old tremolo stop and we could see the book orders coming back in carloads.

Well, we just couldn't wait to go down to old Post Office Box 658, Church Street Annex, the address printed in the back of the old books. We hung at it for about three days and then my friends Hank and Ruthie Hock and I went over

and we looked in Box 658. It wasn't a locked box; you just looked through the glass. We could see that there were a few of these postal cards. I had a terrible sinking sensation. But my friend the promoter said "Bill, they can't put all those cards in the box, they've got bags full of it out there." We go to the clerk and he brings out 12 lousy postal cards, 10 of them were completely illegible, written by doctors, druggists, and monkeys? We had exactly two orders for the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and we were absolutely and utterly stone-broke.

The Sheriff then moved in on the office, poor Mr. Blackwell wondered what to do for money and felt like taking the book over at that very opportune moment, the house which Lois and I lived in was foreclosed and we and our furniture were set out on the street. Such was the state of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the state of grace the Wilson's were in the summer of 1939. Moreover, a great cry went up from the drunks, "What about our \$4,500?" Even Charlie (Towns) who was pretty well off was a little uneasy about the note for \$2,500. What would we do? What could we do? We put our goods in storage on the cuff; we couldn't even pay the drayman. An A. A. lent us his summer camp, another AA lent us his car, and the folks around New York began to pass the hat for groceries for the Wilson's and supplied us with \$50 per month. So, we had a lot of discontented stockholders, \$50 bucks a month, a summer camp and an automobile with which to revive the failing fortunes of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

We began to shop around from one magazine to another asking if they would give us some publicity, nobody bit and it looked like the whole dump was going to be foreclosed; book, office, Wilson's, everything. One of the boys in New York happened to be a little bit prosperous at the time and he had a fashionable clothing business on Fifth Avenue, which we learned was mostly on

mortgage, having drunk nearly all of it up. His name was Bert Taylor. I went up to Bert one day and I said "Bert, there is a promise of an article in *Liberty Magazine*, I just got it today but it won't come out until next September. It's going to be called 'Alcoholics and God' and will be printed by Fulton Oursler the editor of *Liberty Magazine*. Bert, when that piece is printed, these books will go out in carload lots. We need \$1,000 bucks to get us through the summer." Bert asked, "Well, are you sure that the article is going to be printed?" "Oh yes," I said, "that's final." He said, "O.K., I haven't got the dough but there's this man down in Baltimore, Mr. Cochran, he's a customer of mine, he buys his pants in here. Let me call him up." Bert gets on long-distance with Mr. Cochran in Baltimore, a very wealthy man, and says to him "Mr. Cochran, from time to time I mentioned this alcoholic fellowship to which I belong. Our fellowship has just come out with a magnificent new textbook, a sure cure for alcoholism. Mr. Cochran, this is something we think every public library in America should have, and Mr. Cochran, the retail price of the book is \$2.50. Mr. Cochran, if you'll just buy a couple of thousand of those books and put them in the large libraries, of course we would sell them for that purpose at a considerable discount."

Mr. Cochran, some publicity will come out next fall about this new book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, but in the meantime, these books are moving slowly and we need, say, \$1,000 to tide us over. Would you loan the Works Publishing Company this?"

Mr. Cochran asked what the balance sheet of the Works Publishing Company looked like and after he learned what it looked like he said "no thanks." So Bert then said, "Now Mr. Cochran, you know me. Would you loan the money to me on the credit of my business?" "Why certainly," Mr. Cochran said, "send me down your note." So Bert hocked the business that a year or two later was to

go broke anyway and saved the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The thousand dollars lasted until the *Liberty* article came out. 800 inquiries came in as a result of that, we moved a few books and we barely squeaked through the year 1939. In all this period we heard nothing from John D. Rockefeller when all of a sudden, in about February 1940, Mr. Richardson came to a trustees meeting of the Foundation and announced that he had great news. We were told that Mr. Rockefeller, whom we had not heard from since 1937, had been watching us all this time with immense interest. Moreover, Mr. Rockefeller wanted to give this fellowship a dinner to which he would invite his friends to see the beginnings of this new and promising start.

Mr. Richardson produced the invitation list. Listed were the President of Chase Bank, Wendell Wilkie, and all kinds of very prominent people, many of them extremely rich. I mean, after a quick look at the list I figured it would add up to a couple of billion dollars. So, we felt maybe at least, you know, there would be some money in sight. So, the dinner came, and we got Harry Emerson Fosdick who had reviewed the AA book and he gave us a wonderful plug. Dr. Kennedy came and spoke on the medical attitudes. He'd seen a patient of his, a very hopeless gal (Marty Mann) recover. I got up, talked about life among the "anonymie," and the bankers assembled 75 strong and in great wealth, sat at the tables with the alcoholics. The bankers had come probably for some sort of command performance and they were a little suspicious that perhaps this was another prohibition deal, but they warmed up under the influence of the alcoholics.

Mr. Ryan, the hero of the Heatter episode and still sober, was asked at his table by a distinguished banker, "Why, Mr. Ryan, we presumed you were in the banking business." Ryan says, "Not at all sir, I just got out of Great Stone Asylum." Well, that intrigued the bankers and they were all warming up. Unfortunately, Mr. Rockefeller couldn't get to

the dinner. He was quite sick that night so he sent his son, a wonderful gent, Nelson Rockefeller, in his place instead. After the show was over and everyone was in fine form, we were all ready again for the big touch. Nelson Rockefeller got up and speaking for his father said, "My father sends word that he is so sorry that he cannot be here tonight, but is so glad that so many of his friends can see the beginnings of this great and wonderful thing. Something that affected his life more than almost anything that had crossed his path." A stupendous plug that was! Then Nelson said, "Gentlemen, this is a work that proceeds on good will. It requires no money." Whereupon, the 2 billion dollars got up and walked out. That was a terrific letdown, but we weren't let down for too long.

Again, the hand of Providence had intervened. Right after dinner, Mr. Rockefeller asked that the talks and pamphlets be published. He approached the rather defunct Works Publishing Company and said he would like to buy 400 books to send to all of the bankers who had come to the dinner and to those who had not. Seeing that this was for a good purpose, we let him have the books cheap. He bought them cheaper than anybody has since. We sold 400 books to John D. Rockefeller Jr. for one buck apiece to send to his banker friends. He sent out the books and pamphlets and with it, he wrote a personal letter and signed every dog gone one of them. In this letter he stated how glad he was that his friends had been able to see the great beginning of what he thought would be a wonderful thing, how deeply it had affected him and then he added (unfortunately) "gentlemen, this is a work of goodwill. It needs little, if any, money. I am giving these good people \$1,000." So, the bankers all received Mr. Rockefeller's letter and counted it up on the cuff. Well, if John D. is giving \$1,000, me with only a few million should send these boys about \$10! One who had an alcoholic relative in tow sent us \$300. So, with Mr. Rockefeller's \$1,000 plus the solicitation of all the

rest of these bankers, we got together the princely sum of \$3,000 which was the first outside contribution of the Alcoholic Foundation.

The \$3,000 was divided equally between Smithy and me so that we could keep going somehow. We solicited that dinner list for 5 years and got about \$3,000 a year for 5 years. At the end of that time, we were able to say to Mr. Rockefeller, "We don't need any more money. The book income is helping to support our office, the groups are contributing to fill in and the royalties are taking care of Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson."

Now you see Mr. Rockefeller's decision not to give us money was a blessing. He gave of himself. He gave of himself when he was under public ridicule for his views about alcohol. He said to the whole world "this is good." The story went out on the wires all over the world. People ran into the bookstores to get the new book and boy, we really began to get some book orders. An awful lot of

inquiries came into the little office at Vessy Street. The book money began to pay Ruth. We hired one more to help. There was Ruthie, another gal and I. And then came Jack Alexander with his terrific article in the Saturday Evening Post. Then an immense lot of inquiries... 6,000 or 7,000 of them. Alcoholics Anonymous had become a national institution.

Such is the story of the preparation of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" and of its subsequent effect, you all have some notion. The proceeds of that book have repeatedly saved the office in New York. But, it isn't the money that has come out of it that matters; it is the message that it carried. That transcended the mountains and the sea and is even at this moment, lighting candles in dark caverns and on distant beaches.

Big Book Names & Dates

From the First 188 Pages of the Big Book

PREFACE 2ED

- xv – **Bill Wilson & Dr. Bob** during a talk between a NY stockbroker & Akron physician (they first met on 5/12/35)
- xvi – **Ebby Thacher** alcoholic friend in contact with Oxford Group
- xvi – **Dr. Silkworth** (named) NY specialist in alcoholism
- xvi – **Bill Wilson** The broker
- xvi – **Dr. Bob** the Akron physician
- xvii – **Bill Dotson** AA#3 (sober date was 6/26/35, Bill Wilson & Dr. Bob first visited him on 6/28/35)
- xviii – **Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick** (named) noted clergyman
- xviii – **Fulton Oursler** (named) editor of Liberty
- xviii – **John Rockefeller Jr.** (named) gave dinner
- xviii – **Jack Alexander** (named) wrote Saturday Evening Post article
- xix – **Traditions** all Twelve Traditions mentioned
- xx – **recovery rate from 1939-1955** Of alcoholics who came to AA & really tried, 50% got sober at once & remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with AA showed improvement
- xxvii – **9 years experience** Dr. Silkworth had 9 years of experience with alcoholics & drug addicts when he wrote this
- xxvii – **Bill Wilson** one of the leading contributors of this book
- xxxi – **Hank Parkhurst** man brought in to be treated for chronic alcoholism
- xxxi – **Fitz Mayo** another case, had hid in a barn

BILL'S STORY (BILL WILSON)

- 1 – **Winchester Cathedral** Bill Wilson has a spiritual experience ("Here I stood on the edge of the abyss into which thousands were falling that very day. A feeling of despair settled down on me - where was He - why did He not come - and suddenly in that moment of darkness, He was there. I felt an all-enveloping, comforting, powerful presence. Tears stood in my eyes, and as I looked about, I saw on the faces of others nearby, that they too had glimpsed the great reality.")
- 1 – **Thomas Thetcher** an old tombstone (the name of the Hampshire Grenadier)
- 1 – **a special token** Upon leaving France the men of his [Bill Wilson's] battery paid him special honor. His letter of January 3, 1919, read: "Quite a touching thing happened yesterday. The men presented Captain Sackville and me each with a watch, chain and ring. The whole battery was lined up, and I tell you it was equal to promotion and decoration by J. J. Pershing himself! Coming as it did from a clear sky, it was quite overwhelming. Wouldn't have changed insignia with a brigadier general. It means so much more

DOCTOR'S OPINION

- (was page 1 in the first edition of the Big Book)
- xxv-xxxii **Dr. William D. Silkworth** well known doctor (worked at Towns Hospital, N.Y.C.)
- xxv – **Bill Wilson** patient he regarded as hopeless

- than promotion. Insofar as I know, we are the only people in the regiment who have been so honored. I'm sure you will be as happy and proud as I am." which had inspired such awe in me as a lad
- 4 – **Penick & Ford** XYZ-32 (stock) (Penick & Ford is a corn products company, it went from 52 to 32 in 1 day)
- 4 – **Dick Johnson** friend in Montreal (worked at Greenshields & Co., a brokerage house)
- 4 – **1930** By the following spring
- 4 – **Macy's** wife (Lois) work in dept. store
- 5 – **A. Wheeler & F. Winans** 1932 formed group to buy bender - chance vanished
- 5 – **written sweet promises** Promise followed empty promise. On October 20, 1928, Bill wrote in the family Bible, the most sacred place he knew: 'To my beloved wife that has endured so much, let this stand as evidence of my pledge to you that I have finished with drink forever.' By Thanksgiving Day of that year he had written, 'My strength is renewed a thousandfold in my love for you,' In January 1929, he added, 'To tell you once more that I am finished with it. I love you.' None of those promises, however, carried the anguish Bill expressed in an undated letter to Lois: 'I have failed again this day. That I should continue to even try to do right in the grand manner is perhaps a great foolishness. Righteousness simply does not seem to be in me. Nobody wishes it more than I. Yet no one flouts it more often.' Again, he wrote a promise to his wife in the family Bible: 'Finally and for a lifetime, thank God for your love.' The promise was dated September 3, 1930. Like those that had preceded it, it was not kept. That was the last of the Bible promises.
- 6-7 – doctor came with sedative, next day drinking gin & sedative
- 7 – **early spring 1934** I was forty pounds under weight
- 7 – **Dr. L. Strong & Dr. Emily** brother-in-law (husband of sister Dorothy) & mother put him in Towns Hospital
- 7 – **Dr. Silkworth** met kind doctor explained ill, body & mind
- 7 – **Summer, 1934** After a time I returned to the hospital
- 8 – **11/11/34** Armistice Day 1934
- 8-12 – **Ebby Thacher** old school friend
- 9 – **Shep C, Rowland H, Cebra G** two? (three) men appeared in court (Shep Cornell, Rowland Hazzard & Cebra Graves) August 1934
- 9 – **chartered an airplane** January 1929, from Albany
- N.Y. to newly opened Manchester Vt. 10 **Fayette Griffith** (Bill's) grandfather 10 **Winchester Cathedral** (see page 1) 12 **the Cathedral** Winchester Cathedral (see page 1)
- 13 – **12/11/34** At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time (Bill was admitted to the hospital at 2:38PM and he is 39 years old)
- 13 – **Ebby & Shep Cornell** schoolmate visited at hosp with friend
- 14 – **Dr. Silkworth** friend, the doctor
- 14 – **12/14/34** God's impact on Bill is sudden & profound, he calls Silky & describes what just happened, this spiritual experience as THE result of the work he did on pages 13 & 14 were all done when Bill had 3 days of sobriety or less!
- 14 – **Ebby** friend emphasized
- 16 – **Bill C.** committed suicide in Bill & Lois's home after having stolen & sold about \$700 worth of their clothes and luggage (a lawyer, stayed with them almost a year, died 1936)
- 16 – **36 years sober, age 75** Bill W., co-founder of AA, died January 24, 1971
- THERE IS A SOLUTION**
- 21 – **mostly from Bill's story** Here is the fellow who has been puzzling you...
- 26 – **Rowland Hazard** certain American Business man -treated by Dr. Carl Jung (1931) & joined the Oxford Group in February 1934
- 26 – **Freud & Adler** consulted best known American psychiatrists (Freud was sick & Adler was
-

booked up so Rowland ended up working with Jung)

26 – **Dr. Carl Jung** (named) European psychiatrist

28 – **William James** (named) American psychologist who wrote "Varieties of Religious Experience"

MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

32-3 – A man of thirty (On page 123 of Richard Peabody's 1931 book "The Common Sense of Drinking", Peabody briefly mentions an unknown man who gave up drinking until he had made his fortune five years later. Resuming "moderate" drinking, he was soon back in his

alcoholic difficulties, losing his money in two or three years and dying of alcoholism a few years after that. This anecdotal account was probably the germ idea for this story)

35-7 – **Ralph Furlong** a friend we shall call Jim (Ralph is the author of the story "Another Prodigal Son" which only appeared in the first edition of the Big Book)

37-8 – jay walker story

39-43 – Harry Brick Fred

43 – **Dr. Percy Poliak** staff member world-renowned hospital (Bellevue Hospital, N.Y.)

WE AGNOSTICS

50 – **Alfred E. Smith** "celebrated American statesman" (four time governor of New York and unsuccessful first Roman Catholic presidential candidate.)

51 – **Wright brothers** (named) first successful flight 1903

51 – **Professor Langley** Samuel P. Langley, flying machine landed in Potomac - 1903 project for War Dept.

52 – **Wright brothers** (named) built a machine that could fly

55 – people who proved that man could never fly

56 – **Fitz Mayo** the minister's son

56 – **Bill Wilson** approached by an alcoholic

HOW IT WORKS

INTO ACTION

76 – **Book of James 2:20,26** Faith without works is dead

79 – man we know was remarried

80 – **Oxford Group member** he accepted sum of money from business rival - explained in church

Working With Others

101 – **Eskimo** running away from drinking to Greenland Ice cap

TO WIVES

FAMILY AFTERWARD

124 – Henry Ford (named)

133 – one of the many doctors

135 – **Earl Treat** one of our friends is a heavy smoker and coffee drinker

TO EMPLOYERS

(chapter was written by Hank Parkhurst)

136 – **Hank Parkhurst** member who spent life in world of big business

136 – Mr. B.

137 – one of the best salesmen

137 – man who hung himself

138 – **Frank Winans?** officer of one of largest banks in America

138 – **Bob E. or Rowland H.?** an executive of the same bank

140 – **Dr. Edward Cowles?** Chicago doctor with spinal fluid theory of alcoholics (see www.eskimo.com/~burked/history/cowles.html)

141 – **Standard Oil New Jersey** "if my company" (that Hank Parkhurst worked for)

148 – vice-president of large industrial concern

149 – **Honor Dealers Co.** I own a little company (an automobile polish distributorship (see page 246 & 248)

149-50 – Bill Wilson & Jim Burwell two alcoholic employees

VISION FOR YOU

- 151 – Bill's former Higher Power King Alcohol
- 151 – **Four Horsemen** (named) Terror,
Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair -
Revelations 6:2-8 war, famine, pestilence,
and death personified the four plagues of
mankind
- 153 – **Bill Wilson** one of our numbers made a
journey
- 153 – **Akron, OH.** a certain western city
- 153 – **National Rubber Machinery** business (of that
trip) involved in proxy fight
- 154 – **Akron, Ohio** in a strange place (had to have
that one)
- 154 – The Merry Man Tavern an attractive bar
- 154 – **Mayflower Hotel** paced a hotel lobby
- 154 – **Reverend Walter Tunks** clergyman he phoned
(Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in
Akron)
- 155 – "the old Episcopal Church" church selected at
random
- 155 – **Dr. Bob** resident near nadir of alcoholic
despair
- 155 – **AMA convention** went on a roaring bender
(Traymore Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ)
- 156 – **around 6/17/35** He (Dr. Bob) has not had a
drink since. (It is generally stated that Dr.
Bob's sobriety date and the founding date of
AA is 6/10/35, but recent facts around Dr.
Bob's last drink indicate that this date is
closer to a week or so later.)
- 156 – **Mrs. Hall/Akron City Hosp** head nurse of
local hospital
- 156-8 – **Bill Dotson** real corker, none too
promising, future AA, lawyer
- 158 – **6/26/35** He (Bill Dotson) never drank again.
- 158 – **Ernie Galbraith - Akron** devil may care
young fellow
- 159 – **Bill Wilson** our friend of the hotel lobby
incident
- 159 – **Dr. Bob, Bill D, Ernie G** leaving behind his
first acquaintance, the lawyer and the devil-
may-care chap

- 159 – Archie T, Bill/Bob G (Salesman), Bill Van H,
Dr. Bob, Charlie S, Dick S (AA#7), Ernie G,
Harry Z, Jim S (Writer), Joe D (AA #5),
Marie B, May B & Tom L/Jim L, Paul S,
Ralph F, Wally G, Walter B - all 17 have
stories in 1st edition. Additionally, Phil S
(AA#5), Bill V, J.D.H., Bob E, Ken A were
sober by 1937. Some may go with p.161. A
year and 6 months later these 3 succeeded
with 7 more (puts this early 1937)
- 160 – T. Henry & Clarace Williams One man and
his wife
- 161 – **Cleveland, OH.** community 30 miles away
- 161 – **Lloyd T, Clarence S, Charlie J.** (see names
from pg. 159) has 15 fellows of AA
- 161 – **New York** eastern city
- 162 – **Towns Hospital, NYC** well known hospital for
treatment of alcohol & drugs
- 162 – **Bill Wilson** member there 6 years ago
- 162 – **Dr. Silkworth** doctor in attendance
- 162 – eastern city NYC
- 162 – western friends Ohio
- 162 – New York, Akron/Cleveland our two large
centers
- 163 – **Hank Parkhurst** AA member living in a large
community (Montclair, NJ)
- 163 – **Dr. Howard** prominent psychiatrist (of
Montclair, NJ/Chief Psychiatrist for the State
of NJ)
- 163 – **Dr. Russell Blaisdell** chief psychiatrist of a
large public hospital (Rockland State
Hospital in NY)

DOCTOR BOB'S NIGHTMARE

- Dr. Bob Smith
- 171 – **Sister Ignatia** (named) At St. Thomas
Hospital, Dr. Bob was well assisted
beginning in August 1939 (along with Dr.
Bob's office girl Lillian)
- 171 – **St. Johnsbury, VT.** I was born (8/8/1879) in a
small New England village
- 171 – Judge & Mrs. Walter Perrin Smith Dr. Bob's
father & mother

- 172 – **St. Johnsbury Academy** Dr. Bob graduates from high school 1898
- 172 – **Dartmouth College** one of the best colleges in the country (in Hanover, N.H., graduated 1902)
- 173 – **Univ. of Michigan** entering one of the largest universities in the country (1905)
- 174 – **Rush Medical Univ.** another of the leading universities of the country (near Chicago, Ill., received medical degree 1910)
- 174 – **Akron, OH.** western city
- 174 – **1912** I opened an office downtown
- 174-5 local sanitarium
- 175 – **Scylla and Charybdis** (named) (mythology: Strait of Messina-Big rock with monster (Scylla) one side, whirlpool (Charybdis) on other. Odysseus managed to navigate through) translated: "between a rock & a hard place"
- 175 – **1/16/19 - 12/5/33** Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition)
- 176 – **?** hide out in one of the clubs
- 176 – **?** registering at a hotel
- 176 – **Anne Smith** my wife (Anne & Dr. Bob went out together for 17 years before they were married)
- 177 – **Wallace Beery/Tugboat Annie** (named) play or movie involving a drinking man
- 178 – **Oxford Group** crowd of people -their poise, health and happiness (Dr. Bob got involved with the O.G. in 1933 & separated himself from them Nov. or Dec. 1939)
- 179 – **Henrietta Sieberling** a lady called up my wife
- 179 – 5/12/35 We entered her house at exactly five o'clock
- 179 – **AMA Convention** meeting of a national society (Traymore Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ; June 10-14, Monday-Friday, 1935)
- 179 – nurse Lily/Cuyahoga Falls I woke up at a friend's house, town near home
- 179 – **Bill Wilson** my newly made friend
- 179 – **Bill Wilson** meets a friend of hers 181 **11/16/50**
Dr. Bob died on 11/16/50, he was 55 years old, he had 20 years sober

That Ain't in the Book!

We hear a lot of stuff said in meetings that can't be reconciled with the program as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. What follows are some of the things we often hear, along with what the 1st Edition of our basic text has to say on the subject.

This list, along with the corresponding page and paragraph from the Big Book that deals with the subject.

"Remember your last drunk."

"We are unable, at times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink."

Page 24, Paragraph 2

"I choose not to drink today."

"The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink."

Page 24 Paragraph 2

"Play the tape all the way through."

"The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts do occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that

keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove."

Page 24, paragraph 3

"Think through the drink."

"Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power."

Page 43, paragraph 4:

"I will always be recovering, never recovered."

"ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism"

Title Page

"Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body.

Page 20, paragraph 2

"We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body."

Forward, First Edition

"Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered."

^{4 4} As of January 2011, primarypurposegroup.org is a non-working website.

Page 132, paragraph 2

"We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others."

Page 132, paragraph 3

"We are all just an arm's length away from a drink."

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality - safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us"

Page 84, paragraph 4

"I don't have an alcohol problem, I have a living problem."

"In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete."

Page xxiv, paragraph 2

"Don't drink and go to meetings." "Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

Page 34, paragraph 2

"Whether such a person can quit upon a non-spiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not."

Page 34, paragraph 3

"Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined."

Page 17, paragraph 2

"This is a selfish program."

"Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs."

Page 20, paragraph 1

"Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night. "

Page 97, paragraph 2

"For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead."

Page 14-15

"Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles"

Page 62, paragraph 2

"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!"

Page 62, paragraph 3

"Meeting makers make it."

"Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery"

Page 59, paragraph 3

"I'm powerless over people, places, and things."

"We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others."

Page 132, paragraph 3

"Years of living with an alcoholic is almost sure to make any wife or child neurotic."

Page 122, paragraph 3

"The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough."

Page 89, paragraph 2

"You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail."

Page 103, paragraph 2

"You're in the right place."

"Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason - ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor - becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention."

"If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right- about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him."

Page 20-21

"We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose

yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

Page 31, paragraph 2

"Your husband may be only a heavy drinker. His drinking may be constant or it may be heavy only on certain occasions. Perhaps he spends too much money for liquor. It may be slowing him up mentally and physically, but he does not see it. Sometimes he is a source of embarrassment to you and his friends. He is positive he can handle his liquor, that it does him no harm, that drinking is necessary in his business. He would probably be insulted if he were called an alcoholic. This world is full of people like him. Some will moderate or stop altogether, and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after a while."

Page 92, paragraph 2

"If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic."

"If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience."

Page 95, paragraph 4:

"If an alcoholic wants to get sober, nothing you say can make him drink."

"A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it."

Page 103, paragraph 2

"We must change playmates, playgrounds, and playthings."

"Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. His only chance for sobriety would be some place like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything!"

Page 100-101

"I'm a people pleaser. I need to learn to take care of myself."

"Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind?"

Page 61, paragraph 2

"Don't drink, even if your ass falls off."

"Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

Page 34, paragraph 2

"I haven't had a drink today, so I'm a complete success today."

"The elimination of drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs."

Page 19, paragraph 1:

"It's my opinion that..." or "I don't know anything about the Big Book, but this is the way I do it..."

"We have concluded to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as we see it. We shall bring to the task our combined experience and knowledge. This should suggest a useful program for anyone concerned with a drinking problem."

Page 19, paragraph 1:

"Don't drink, no matter what."

"Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

Page 34, paragraph 2

"We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

Page 31, paragraph 4

"We need to give up planning; it doesn't work."

"On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives. In thinking about our day we may face indecision."

We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while."

Page 86, paragraphs 3-4

"I have a choice to not drink today."

"We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better."

Page 30, paragraph 3

"If all I do is stay sober today, then it's been a good day."

"Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep sober. Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't. But he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated."

Page 82, paragraph 3

"We feel a man is unthinking when he says sobriety is enough."

Page 82 paragraph 4

"You don't need a shrink. You have an alcoholic personality. All you will ever need is in the first 164 pages of the Big Book."

"But this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health

problems to such persons. Most of them give freely of themselves, that their fellows may enjoy sound minds and bodies. Try to remember that though God has wrought miracles among us, we should never belittle a good doctor or psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and in following his case afterward."

Page 133, 2nd paragraph

"AA is the only way to stay sober."

"If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us."

page 95, paragraph 4:

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little."

Page 164, paragraph 3

"My sponsor told me that, if in making an amend I would be harmed, I could consider myself as one of the 'others' in Step Nine."

"Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be."

" Page 79, paragraph 2

"I need to forgive myself first" or "You need to be good to yourself."

"The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others."

Page 74, paragraph 2

"Take what you want and leave the rest."

"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news

this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism."

Page 17, paragraph 3:

"Just do the next right thing."

"We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision."

Page 86, paragraph 4:

"Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas."

Page 87, paragraph 1

"Don't make any major decisions for the first year."

"(a) – That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.

(b) – That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.

(c) – That God could and would if He were sought. Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him."

Page 60, paragraph 4

"When ready, we say something like this: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." We have then completed Step Seven."

Page 76, paragraph 2

"Stay out of relationships for the first year!"

"We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct."

Page . 69, paragraph 1

"In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come if we want it."

Page 69, paragraph 3:

"God alone can judge our sex situation."

Page 69, paragraph 4

"Counsel with other persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge."

Page 69-70

"We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing."

Page 70, Paragraph 2

"Alcohol was my drug of choice."

"The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink."

Page 24, paragraph 2

"Keep coming back, eventually it will rub off on you."

"Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us"

Page 64, Paragraph 1

"Ninety Meetings in Ninety Days."

"We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek."

"Page 15, paragraph 2

"None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we think its effectiveness would be increased if we did."

Page 19, paragraph 2

"Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery"

Page 59, paragraph 3

"You only work one step a year." or "Take your time to work the steps."

"What often takes place in a few months can hardly be brought about by himself alone."

Page 569, paragraph 3

"Next we launched on a course of vigorous action."

Page 63, paragraph 3

"If that is so, this step may be postponed, only, however, if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity"

Page 74, paragraph 2

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for AN HOUR, carefully reviewing what we have done." "Make sure to put something good about yourself in your 4th step inventory."

Page 75, paragraph 3

"First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure."

Page 64 paragraph 3

"The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them."

Page 71 paragraph 1

"If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning."

Page 67 paragraph 3

"You need to stay in those feelings and really feel them."

Page 84, paragraph 2

"When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them."

Page. 125 paragraph 1

"So we think that unless some good and useful purpose is to be served, past occurrences should not be discussed."

"There are no musts in this program."

THE 37 MUSTS

"It must be done if any results are to be expected."

Page 99, paragraph 1

"We must try to repair the damage immediately lest we pay the penalty by a spree."

Page 99, paragraph 2

"It must be on a better basis, since the former did not work."

Page 99, paragraph 3

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead."

Page 83, paragraph 1

"We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone."

Page 83, paragraph 2

"Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it."

Page 74, paragraph 1

"The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others."

Page 74, paragraph 2

"But we must not use this as a mere excuse to postpone."

Page 75, paragraph 1

"But we must go further and that means more action."

Page 85, paragraph 3

"Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities."

Page 85, paragraph 2

"These are thoughts which must go with us constantly."

Page 85, paragraph 2

"If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink."

Page 80, paragraph 1

"I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all."

Page 14, paragraph 2

"Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!"

Page 62, paragraph 3

"The man must decide for himself."

Page 144, paragraph 3

"To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends - this is an experience you must not miss."

Page 89, paragraph 2

"If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind"

Page 33, paragraph 3

"We must not shrink at anything."

Page 79, paragraph 2

"But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others."

Page 86, paragraph 2

"He must redouble his spiritual activities if he expects to survive."

Page 120, paragraph 2

"I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I?"

Page 152, paragraph 2

"He must decide for himself whether he wants to go on"

Page 95, paragraph 3

"If he is to find God, the desire must come from within."

Page 95, paragraph 3

"Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary."

Page 159, paragraph 3

"Both saw that they must keep spiritually active. "

Page 156, paragraph 3

"That is where our work must be done."

Page 130, paragraph 2

"Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't."

Page 82, paragraph 3

"He should understand that he must undergo a change of heart"

Page 143, paragraph 2

"Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it."

Page 69, paragraph 4

"We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm"

Page 69, paragraph 4

"We had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life - or else."

Page 44, paragraph 3

"We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them."

Page 78, paragraph 3

"To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action."

Page 93, paragraph 3

"His defense must come from a Higher Power."

Page 43, paragraph 4

"We saw that these resentments must be mastered"

Page 66, paragraph 4

"For he knows he must be honest if he would live at all."

Page 146, paragraph 4

"We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world."

Page 73, paragraph 5:

But Remember...

"When the man is presented with this volume it is best that no one tell him he must abide by its suggestions."

Page 144, paragraph 3

109 Promises

How many promises await us as we trudge this road of happy destiny? Some folks think they are limited to those following Step 9 on page 83. There are 20 there (not the 12 often mentioned). But you will find promises for each step and in many other places as well. We are sure you want to know what they are.

Thanks to Buddy T. at About.com we were referred to the Big Book Comes Alive website, which lists their version of 147 Big Book promises. We have not yet added from their list to ours the missing promises that meet our promise criteria.

However, there is a price to pay for reading on. You must contact us with additional promises from inside the front cover through page 164. Here are well over 100 presented as of today:

Promises of Step Two

1) *There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of short-comings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet.*

2) *We have found much of heaven and*

3) *we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.*

4) *The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe.*

5) *The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous.*

6) *He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.*

Big Book page 25

7) *Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences are phenomena. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements.*

8) *Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side,*

9) *and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.*

Big Book page 27:

10) *We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God.*

- 11) *A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, "a design for living" that really works.*

Big Book page 28

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God.

- 12) *Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach*

- 13) *and to effect a contact with Him.*

- 14) *As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps.*

- 15) *We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him.*

- 16) *To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek.*

- 17) *It is open, we believe, to all men.*

Big Book page 46

- 18) *Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him.*

- 19) *Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach.*

- 20) *That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So we used our own conception, however limited it was. We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way.*

- 21) *It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.*

Big Book page 47

- 22) *Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader.*

- 23) *It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were.*

Big Book page 48

- 24) *Here are thousands of men and women, worldly indeed. They flatly declare that since they have come to believe in a Power greater than themselves, to take a certain attitude toward the Power, and to do certain simple things, there has been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking.*

- 25) *In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them.*

- 26) *This happened soon after they whole-heartedly met a few simple requirements. Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they show the underlying reasons why they were making heavy going of life. Leaving aside the drink question, they tell why living was so unsatisfactory. They show how the change came over them. When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.*

Big Book page 50

- 27) *We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as*

much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.

Big Book page 55

28) *Even so has God restored us all to our right minds. To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly.*

29) *But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him.*

30) *When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us!*

Contributed by Joe Mc.

Big Book page 57

Promises of Step Three

31) *When we sincerely took such a position, all sort of remarkable things followed.*

32) *We had a new Employer.*

33) *He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.*

34) *Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs.*

35) *More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life.*

36) *As we felt new power flow in,*

37) *as we enjoyed peace of mind,*

38) *as we discovered we could face life successfully,*

39) *as we became conscious of His presence,*

40) *we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter.*

41) *We were reborn.*

42) *an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once.*

Contributed by Kay G. and Jon T.

Big Book page 63

43) *At once, we commence to outgrow fear.*

Contributed by Kay G.

Big Book page #68.

43a) *We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people.*

Contributed by Tom T. of Omaha.

Big Book page #70.

Promises of Step Five

Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing,

44) *we are delighted.*

45) *We can look the world in the eye.*

46) *We can be alone at perfect peace and ease.*

47) *Our fears fall from us.*

48) *We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.*

49) *We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience.*

50) *The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly.*

51) *We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.*

Big Book page 75

Promises of Step Eight

52) *If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.*

53) *In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own faults,*

54) *so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour.*

55) *Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our*

56) *former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well.*

57) Occasionally, they will offer assistance.

Big Book page 78

Promises of Step Nine

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development,

58) *we will be amazed before we are half way through.*

59) *We are going to know a new freedom*

60) *and a new happiness.*

61) *We will not regret the past*

62) *nor wish to shut the door on it.*

63) *We will comprehend the word serenity and*

64) *we will know peace.*

65) *No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.*

66) *That feeling of uselessness (will disappear)*

67) *and self-pity will disappear.*

68) *We will lose interest in selfish things and*

69) *(We will) gain interest in our fellows.*

70) *Self-seeking will slip away.*

71) *Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.*

72) *Fear of people (will leave us) and*

73) *(fear) of economic insecurity will leave us.*

74) *We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.*

75) *We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*

76) *Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.*

77) *They will always materialize if we work for them.*

Big Book page 83

Promises of Step Ten

64) *And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol.*

65) *For by this time sanity will have returned.*

66) *We will seldom be interested in liquor.*

67) *If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame.*

68) *We react sanely and normally, and*

69) *we will find that this has happened automatically.*

70) *We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it.*

71) *We are not fighting it,*

72) *neither are we avoiding temptation.*

73) *We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected.*

74) *We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.*

75) *We are neither cocky nor are we afraid.*

76) *That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.*

Big Book page 84

Promises of Step Eleven

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions

77) *we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use.*

78) *Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.*

79) *In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.*

Big Book page 86

80) *What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind.*

81) *Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration.*

82) *We come to rely upon it.*

83) *We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.*

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done."

84) *We are then in much less danger of excitement,*

85) *fear,*

86) *anger,*

87) *worry,*

88) *self-pity,*

89) *or foolish decisions.*

90) *We become much more efficient.*

91) *We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.*

92) *It works—it really does.*

Big Book page 87

93) *Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.*

94) *You can help when no one else can.*

95) *You can secure their confidence when others fail.*

96) *Life will take on new meaning.*

97) *To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.*

Big Book page 97

Promises of Step Twelve

98) *Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen.*

Contributed by Kate O.

99) *When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned.*

Contributed by Kate O.

100) *Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!*

Contributed by Beth

101) *Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do.*

Contributed by Kate O.

Big Book page 100

102) *Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.*

Contributed by Beth

103) *The power of God goes deep!*

Contributed by Kate O.

Big Book page 102

104) *But sometimes you must start life anew. We know women who have done it. If such women*

adopt a spiritual way of life their road will be smoother.

Contributed by Kate O.

Big Book page 114

105) *how much better life is when lived on a spiritual plane.*

Contributed by Kate O.

Big Book page 116

106) *These work-outs should be regarded as part of your education, for thus you will be learning to live.*

107) *You will make mistakes, but if you are in earnest they will not drag you down.*

108) *Instead, you will capitalize them.*

109) *A better way of life will emerge when they are overcome.*

Contributed by Kate O.

Big Book page #117:

Sponsorship

by Clarence Snyder, 1944

This is slightly edited from the first pamphlet ever written concerning sponsorship. It was written by Clarence H. Snyder in early 1944. Its original title was to be "AA Sponsorship ... Its Obligations and Its Responsibilities." It was printed by the Cleveland Central Committee under the title; "AA Sponsorship... Its Opportunities and Its Responsibilities."

The masculine form is used throughout for simplicity, although it is intended to include women as well.

The guide was written for the original concept of the 12-Step Call, where the recovering members would accept the invitation of the family or prospective member or seek out those with drinking problems from local doctors (before HIPPA prevented revealing anything about a patient's medical condition). Many of the points still apply to talking with the likely candidate through whatever source they may be contacted.

Preface

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is a potential sponsor of a new member and should clearly recognize the obligations and duties of such responsibility.

The acceptance of an opportunity to take the AA plan to a sufferer of alcoholism entails very real and critically important responsibilities. Each member, undertaking the sponsorship of a fellow alcoholic, must remember that he is offering what

is frequently the last chance of rehabilitation, sanity, or maybe life itself.

Happiness, Health, Security, Sanity, and Life of human beings are the things we hold in the balance when we sponsor an alcoholic.

No member among us is wise enough to develop a sponsorship program that can be successfully applied in every case. However, in the following pages, we have outlined a suggested procedure, which supplemented by the member's own experience, has proven successful.

Personal Gains of Being a Sponsor

No one reaps full benefit from any fellowship he is connected with unless he wholeheartedly engages in its important activities. The expansion of Alcoholics Anonymous to wider fields of greater benefit to more people results directly from the addition of new, worthwhile members or associates.

Any AA who has not experienced the joys and satisfaction of helping another alcoholic regain his place in life has not yet fully realized the complete benefits of this fellowship.

On the other hand, it must be clearly kept in mind that the only possible reason for bringing an alcoholic into AA is for that person's gain. Sponsorship should never be undertaken to:

1. Increase the size of the group
2. For personal satisfaction and glory

3. Because the sponsor feels it his duty to remake the world

Until an individual has assumed the responsibility of setting a shaking, helpless human being back on the path toward becoming a healthy, useful member of society, he has not enjoyed the complete thrill of being an AA.

Source of Names

Most people have among their own friends and acquaintances someone who would benefit from our teachings. Others have names given to them by their church, by their doctor, by their employer, or by some other member, who cannot make a direct contact.

Because of the wide range of the AA activities, the names often come from unusual and unexpected places.

These cases should be contacted as soon as all facts such as: marital status, domestic relations, financial status, drink habits, employment status, and others readily obtainable, are at hand.

Is the Prospect a Candidate?

Much time and effort can be saved by learning as soon as possible if:

1. The man* really has a drinking problem?
2. Does he know he has a problem?
3. Does he want to do something about his drinking?
4. Does he want help?

Sometimes the answers to these questions cannot be made until the prospect has had some AA instruction and an opportunity to think. Often we are given names, which upon investigation, show the prospect is in no sense an alcoholic or is satisfied with his present plan of living. We should not hesitate to drop these names from our lists. However, be sure to let the man know where he can reach us at a later date.

Who Should Become Members

AA is a fellowship of men and women bound together by their inability to use alcohol in any form sensibly, or with profit or pleasure. Obviously, any new members introduced should be the same kind of people, suffering from the same disease.

Most people can drink reasonably, but we are only interested in those who cannot. Party drinkers, social drinkers, celebrators, and others who continue to have more pleasure than pain from their drinking, are of no interest to us.

In some instances, an individual might believe himself to be a social drinker when he definitely is an alcoholic. In many such cases, more time must pass before that person is ready to accept our program. Rushing such a man before he is ready might ruin his chances of ever becoming a successful AA. Do not ever deny future help by pushing too hard in the beginning.

Some people, although definitely alcoholic, have no desire or ambition to better their way of living, and until they do, AA has nothing to offer them.

Experience has shown that age, intelligence, education, background, or the amount of liquor drunk, has little, if any, bearing on whether or not the person is an alcoholic.

Presenting the Plan

In many cases, a man's physical condition is such that he should be placed in a hospital, if at all possible. Many AA members believe hospitalization, with ample time for the prospect to think and plan his future, free from domestic and business worries, offers distinct advantage. In many cases, the hospitalization period marks the beginning of a new life. Other members are equally confident that any man who desires to learn the AA plan for living can do it in his own home or while engaged in normal occupation.

Thousands of cases are treated in each manner and have proved satisfactory.

Suggested Steps

The following paragraphs outline a suggested procedure for presenting the AA plan to the prospect, at home or in the hospital.

Qualify as an Alcoholic

In calling upon a new prospect, it has been found best to qualify oneself as an ordinary person who has found happiness, contentment, and peace of mind through AA.

Immediately make it clear to the prospect that you are a person engaged in the routine business of earning a living. Tell him your only reason for believing yourself able to help him is because you, yourself, are an alcoholic and have had experiences and problems that might be similar to his.

Tell Your Story*

Many members have found it desirable to launch immediately into their personal drinking story as a means of getting the confidence and wholehearted cooperation of the prospect.

It is important in telling the story of your drinking life to tell it in a manner that will describe an alcoholic, rather than a series of humorous drunken parties. This will enable the man to get a clear picture of an alcoholic, which should help him to more definitively decide whether he is an alcoholic.

Inspire Confidence in AA

In many instances, the prospect will have tried various means of controlling his drinking, including hobbies, church, changes of residence, change of associations, and various control plans. These will, of course, have been unsuccessful. Point out your series of unsuccessful efforts to control drinking, their absolute fruitless results,

and yet, you were able to stop drinking through application of AA principles. This will encourage the prospect to look forward, with confidence, to sobriety in AA in spite of the many past failures he might have had with other plans.

Talk About “Plus” Values

Tell the prospect frankly that he cannot quickly understand all the benefits that are coming to him through AA. Tell him of the happiness, peace of mind, health, and in many cases, material benefits that are possible through understanding and application of the AA way of life.

Show Importance of Reading Our Book

Explain the necessity of reading and rereading the AA book. Point out that this book gives a detailed description of the AA tools, and the suggested methods of application using these tools to build a foundation of rehabilitation for living. This is a good time to emphasize the importance of the twelve steps and the four absolutes.

Qualities Required for Success in AA*

Convey to the prospect that the objectives of AA are to provide the ways and means for an alcoholic to regain his normal place in life. Desire, patience, faith, study, and application are most important in determining each individual's plan of action in gaining full benefits of AA.

Introduce Faith

Since the belief of a Power greater than oneself is the heart of the AA plan, and since this idea is very often difficult for a new man, the sponsor should attempt to introduce the beginnings of an understanding of this all-important feature.

Frequently, this can be done by the sponsor relating his own difficulty in grasping a spiritual understanding and the methods he used to overcome his difficulties.

Listen to His Story

While talking to the newcomer, take time to listen and study his reactions in order that you can present your information in a more effective manner. Let him talk too. Remember – Easy Does It.

Take to Several Meetings

To give the new member a broad and complete picture of AA, the sponsor should take him to various meetings within convenient distance of his home. Attending several meetings gives a new man a chance to select a group in which he will be most happy and comfortable. It is extremely important to let the prospect make his own decision as to which group he will join. Impress upon him that he is always welcome at any meeting and can change his home group if he so wishes.

Explain AA to Prospect's Family

A successful sponsor takes pains and makes any required effort to make certain that those people closest and with the greatest interest in their prospect (mother, father, wife, etc.) are fully informed of AA, its principles and its objectives. The sponsor sees that these people are invited to meetings and keeps them in touch with the current situation regarding the prospect at all times.

Help Prospect Anticipate Hospital Experience

A prospect will gain more benefit from a hospitalization period if the sponsor describes the experience and helps him anticipate it, paving the way for those members who will call on him.

Consult Older Members in AA

These suggestions for sponsoring a new man in AA teachings are by no means complete. They are intended only for a framework and general guide. Each individual case is different and should be treated as such. Additional information for sponsoring a new man can be obtained from the experience of older men in the work. A co-sponsor, with an experienced and newer member working on a prospect, has proven very satisfactory.

Before undertaking the responsibility of sponsoring, a member should make certain that he is able and prepared to give the time, effort, and thought such an obligation entails. It might be that he will want to select a co-sponsor to share the responsibility, or he might feel it necessary to ask another to assume the responsibility for the man he has located.

-- Clarence H. Snyder

**IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE A SPONSOR
– BE A GOOD ONE!**

Zen and the Art of Sponsorship

*"God, Make me a
Channel of Thy Peace..."*

-- St. Francis Prayer

To be a channel is to allow what is being channeled to flow through. If it is water, it must include input and outflow. In Sponsorship, it must provide the principles as received into your life through your Sponsor, your experience within the Program, and carrying that message to those you would sponsor.

How to Not Know

The most difficult answer for any alcoholic is "I don't know," but it is "not knowing" that opens the possibility of learning. Even the answer that was perfect yesterday may not be the right answer for today.

Your sponsee will learn more about truth if you say "I don't know, let's find someone with experience with that," and you seek the answer with your sponsee. If you search together through the tools available to you - through prayer, literature, the fellowship, and professional sources - your sponsee will learn how to find an answer by experience and improvisation.

To "not know" is to agree to be a student and makes it possible for you and your sponsee to learn from your Higher Power.

"Not Knowing" how to live without a drink brought you to your Recovery. Recognition of your own limits and the willingness to find the new answer will improve your own recovery and offer your Sponsee

Some groups and sponsors use "Rev. Mychal's Prayer"

"God, take away everything

I think I know about you

and About me, and

teach me."

Essential Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a concept of one member of the program helping another member of the program through the process of the Steps and applying those Steps and principles into their daily life.

Sponsorship requires the ability to see the Now and use the Program to help the sponsee (sometimes called "pigeon," "baby," "cookie," or "protégé") to move through the recovery process using the Twelve Steps.

Essential Improvisation

Improvisation is a specific way of approaching theater, based on the book "Improvisation for the Theatre" by Viola Spolin. Today, improvisation is best known through improv comedy, such as Saturday Night Live or The Second City.

The essence of improvisation is always to support - never deny -- what came before. There is no "one size fits all" philosophy and there are countless ways to successfully carry the message to your Sponsee.

An attitude of Improvisation will allow you to take whatever progress the Sponsee makes with the Steps and application of those Steps to his/her

life as a way to learn the lesson before you, and then move on and move forward.

Essential Zen

Zen is defined by the Free Online Dictionary as “Buddhist doctrine that enlightenment can be attained through direct intuitive insight.” Zen is not a religion. Zen is an approach based on recognition of the moment, the immediate moment, the “Now.”

Sponsorship is the challenge of matching the experience of the Sponsor with the situation of the Sponsee. Zen requires that you be focused on the Now, the Sponsee’s actions, and the tools of the Program, to eliminate the Actions that created the current situation, clean up the baggage of the past which interferes with life in the Now, and the Action required for the personal change Recovery demands.

Improvisation requires the Sponsor be armed with information and a wide variety of specific examples and answers that address the need of the Now. In the Big Book, it says “obviously you can’t carry something you haven’t got,” so it is necessary

that the Sponsor become saturated in varieties of material available in addition to the Sponsor’s own experience.

The combination of Sponsorship, Zen, and Improvisation allows the Sponsor to listen to the Sponsee, respond in a way that includes the “yes, and...” of Improv, and direct the Sponsee into new action to correct the actions and use the available tools, meetings, fellowship, prayer, literature, and phone - whatever suits the moment.

Over-prepare

Get into your Program as never before. You will benefit and you will be amazed at how themes you find in reading, listening to speakers, attending discussion meetings, and conversations with other people in the Program will tie into the obstacles and questions in the “Now” of your sponsee and yourself.

For New Sponsors

So, someone has asked you to be their Sponsor. What do you do?

First, remember you cannot carry something you haven't got. Do you have a Sponsor? Your ability to share with a new prospect is limited to your own experience, so you cannot show a newcomer how to work with a sponsor if you do not work with a Sponsor.

Call your Sponsor as soon as someone asks you and whimper, "What do I do?" Your Sponsor is your best guide to being a Sponsor.

Do you have a network of people in the Program that you can discuss your life and options in recovery? Do you continue to do step work with your sponsor, even after years of sobriety? Do you have a spiritual life? Will you be able to share what you have with the newcomer, even if they are not of the same faith as you?

The experience of a Sponsor and Sponsee working together is unique and should be between equals, one of whom has more experience in Recovery than the other. It is a close teacher / student relationship that may evolve into a friendship, but it is not necessary to become friends for successful Sponsorship.

Being a Sponsor does not mean you are superior to the newcomer – just someone who is a little further along the path than the Sponsee and willing to share what you've done.

A Sponsor helps the Sponsee understand the basics of the Program and works the Sponsee

through the Steps (particularly the 4th and 5th Steps).

A Sponsor shares basic information in the Big Book, most often by sitting together, to go through the first 181 pages out loud, defining the words and concepts to make the Sponsee aware of the tools being laid at his feet.

What a Sponsor is Not

A sponsor is not a bank. Loaning or borrowing money between a sponsor and a sponsee can taint the relationship. The two of you will talk about financial issues, but money can ruin what could be a working relationship that could help both.

A sponsor is not a taxi service. A sponsor may take a sponsee to meetings, particularly to the Sponsor's Home Group, but the sponsee should be encouraged to develop a new network of people in the Program for rides and discussion.

A sponsor is not a counselor. That means marriage- or employment-counselor. You will discuss the sponsee's issues and problems, but you do not have any authority other than your own experience and background in the Steps. Even if you are a licensed counselor, this is not a professional relationship.

A sponsor is not a therapist. Again, even if the sponsor is a licensed therapist, this is not a professional relationship. The Sponsor's job is to help the newcomer through Recovery using the Steps, and the principles in daily living are the focus of the Sponsor and Sponsee. This will cover

areas of money, relationships, employment, sex, desire, defects, and spiritual life.

A Sponsor is not Perfect

No one in our Program has attained perfection, but progress is our ongoing goal. You may make mistakes, but learn from them and share with your Sponsee how mistakes can be used as part of the lessons required for Recovery.

What your Sponsee sees you do is every bit as important as anything you say.

If you do not know something, be honest. Your willingness to seek an answer for something you do not know can be a powerful lesson for your prospect.

Successful Sponsorship

Having a Sponsor or being a Sponsor does not guarantee that the prospect will stay sober.

If your Sponsee goes out and starts drinking again, find someone else to work with who may want what you have to offer.

If you stay sober, the Sponsorship has been effective.

If your Sponsee stays sober, it is not because of your wonderful Sponsorship. It is because you have helped the Sponsee to find and develop his spiritual awakening and personal relationship to a

For New Speakers

So, you have been asked to speak as a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Congratulations! You've seen it done a hundred times, but how do you get up there to deliver a message of your experience, strength, and hope.

This is simply one member's attempt to share Experience, Strength, and Hope with someone else, regardless of how many listeners he or she may have. A member speaking for the first time, or who wants to reexamine how they present their story when they speak to a group, might benefit from a few words from those with previous experience.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

First, introduce yourself. You may choose to say your first name or your full name. Give your sobriety date and the information for your Home Group.

In the Big Book ("Alcoholics Anonymous"), we are told that we are to carry the message and a speaker needs to be clear on what his/her message is. In its simplest form, that message will be "This works."

Your talk should be broken into the three basic phases; "What it was like...", "What Happened...", and "What it is Like Now." It is not the purpose of your talk to explain everything – you won't be able to do that. But you will take some key moments from your story to share. This will include the items under the "What it was like...", "What Happened...", and "What it is Like Now." You may

want to mention if you have had previous bouts of sobriety.

PREPARATION

You really do not need to write a script for everything you are going to say. A simple list of words will remind you what you want to say and in some approximate order that makes sense to you. You will have this list to remind you what you want to say, and then be able to tell that part of your story like you were telling the story to some friends.

Because, you are.

Many speakers do a short prayer before they talk, sometimes alone in the bathroom or a quiet place, sometimes at the beginning of their talk. The best public prayer I have heard is a variation on Fr. Mychal's Prayer.

*"God, take away everything
I think I know about you,
and take away everything
I think I know about me
And teach me."*

LANGUAGE

The book says "We will tell, in our own words..." and no one can tell you what you cannot say. Well, some may try, but their authority is to tell you what they have done, not their theories on forbidden language.

But in the Raleigh area there is a sign some meetings use, "A lack of profanity offends no one."

My language was rough when I arrived in the south. And my story included a lot of the language I used in the streets. After a talk where my sponsor's wife had brought a friend to hear what I had to say, she could only remember that I had used the Queen-Mother of swear words in my talk. My sponsor's wife came up to me to suggest I watch my language.

So I became righteous and brought up the direction from the book, "We will tell, in our own words..." She agreed. "It also says you are to carry the message, and people won't hear the message if you are offending them."

At first I wanted to justify my language but realized that speaking was not about me and how wonderful I was. I was told to carry the message and voluntarily began restricting my language. The result was a better talk about the Program and what it has given me.

You have to make up your own mind.

WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

First, remember who you are talking to. A room full of alcoholics are going to be far too self-involved to bother noticing much of what you are saying. In fact, there may be only a small number of people who are really listening – and you will never know who that is. You may be fooled that the folks who are sitting in the front, bright-eyed and apparently paying attention, are the people who will really get your message.

But don't be too sure of that. Sometimes you may plant a seed that won't take root for months or years, but something from your story may sink in with someone who is new, or who has been around for a while, secretly suffering and ready to try something desperate – like using someone else's story to apply our Program to their own life.

GET SOBER QUICKLY

Many speakers take the opportunity to tell war stories, and some of the things we have done are exactly what give us the authority of experience.

But some never leave the "and I go so drunk that I..." phase - you risk the newcomer leaving the meeting wondering if you ever got sober.

Whatever the length of time you have to talk, we offer this guideline

Try to keep your personal drunk-a-log down to 1/3 of the available time. "We will tell you what we were like..." does not mean talk about your career as a budding alcoholic all night. So, if you are speaking for 45 minutes, no more than 15 minutes for your drunk stories. With 30 minutes, you need no more than 10 minutes of drunk stories.

THE BEGINNING OF YOUR OWN SOBRIETY

The "What happened..." phase of your talk should run no more than 1/3 of the total time, but may be less if you hit a solid bottom and only had to have one sobriety date. With more than one sobriety date you may want to share on why you had to change your date.

BENEFITS

Sometimes a speaker will only talk about the struggles he/she must face in sobriety. Many of us have to share that we are not examples of success with jobs or relationship or behavior.

But never forget that you are talking to a room full of people who already know how to suffer.

Talk about your story in Recovery. Share how you worked your Steps, tell your Home Group, your Sponsor, your Inventory, and Step Work. Share the personal pain that finally gave you the desire to stop drinking. Really!

Your honesty will reach your audience. To stand there and visibly be better than the drunk you are describing will carry a message.

Do not share on Steps or problems you have not had. No one needs more theory. You are there to carry the message of how the actions you have taken – how using the Big Book, the Steps, your Sponsor, and the other tools – have taken you to this new place in your life.

Do not be afraid to share your real past, but do not involve the names or positions of other people in your story by name. You are telling your story, not theirs.

If you have a secret you learned to give up, you are not required to tell that secret from the podium. No one can make that decision but you. If you can share a past secret, it may carry a stronger message to someone in your audience who may need to hear how you found freedom from the poison of secrets.

Tell them how the Program has given what nothing else has. Talk about feeling at peace inside your own skin. Share healing you have experienced, changes in your relationships (family, friends, or work) or health.

Avoid presenting your story so that getting a new car, a new job, or more money as the reward of working your Program. People can become confused with the benefits of the program and material things. Your job is to share your message, your recovery, offer a solution, and “the” result of our Program.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps...”

Step 10

Above all, talk of your hope and belief that the Program succeeded where nothing else could. Share your sense that you felt it would not work for you but that it brought you to where you are now and your hope for the future.

TOOLS STEPS AND SERVICE

Try to include how you have used the Steps and Tools of the Program (meetings, fellowship, literature, sponsor, etc.):

- *Meetings*
- *Fellowship*
- *Sponsorship*
- *Phone*
- *Literature*
- *Writing*

• *Steps and Steps and Steps*

Talk about Service and how it has affected your recovery. Keep it within your own experience and tell how you have done service. This can include carrying meetings into institutions, setting up for meetings, giving rides, talking with newcomers, making and receiving phone calls,

AFTERWARDS

If people come up to thank you, say “Thank you.” It is not your job to explain to them why they are wrong, just say “Thank you.”

If they say they got something from your talk, they might know better than you what is in their own head.

THE THREE TALKS

Almost all speakers say they had three talks:

- *The talk they planned and rehearsed to whatever level – **the talk they wanted to give;***
- ***The talk they actually gave;***
- *The talk based on things they remembered after the meeting – what they think **they should have said.***

That is common. Like life, you do as well as you can and do it a little bit better next time. Do your best and learn. You can do it better the next time.

EMPTYING YOUR CUP

There is an old teaching story of a petitioner coming to see a monk for wisdom. The monk offered him a cup of tea and the petitioner held out a cup. The monk poured until the cup was full, then kept pouring until the cup overflowed and the tea spilled all over the floor.

When the teapot was empty, the monk shook his head and looked at the petitioner. He said:

“How can I give you any tea if you do not give me an empty cup?”

Speaking is your opportunity to empty your cup to get the next blessing or lesson.

A LIST

You may want to use an index card or a sheet of note paper to help you, should your mind go blank looking at the faces staring at you.

It can be very simple, just a few one or three word cues to remind you of what you intended to say.

Here is a sample of how one speaker might make such a list:

- Sobriety Date
- Home Group
- Mama dies
- Always the 'new' kid
- Confusion - my drinking problem separate from my dad's
- First AA meetings - uplifting stories
- Weak sponsors
- Two phony inventories, drank
- Rape and powerlessness
- Day 1
- Real Sponsor
- Real Inventory
- Going to Prisons
- Service
- Heart Surgery
- diabetes
- Losing Norma
- Today

12 Step Programs Directory

*Anon Family Group Inc.
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617
757 563-1600
www.al-anon.alateen.org*

*All Addicts Anonymous (AAA)
40 Wickstead Way
Thornhill, Ont L3T 5E4
Canada
Tel: 416 657 7771
www.alladdictsanonymous.org*

*AA World Services, Inc.,
P.O. Box 459,
New York, NY 10163
(212) 870-3400
www.aa.org*

*Adult Children of Alcoholics WSO (ACA)
P.O.Box 3216
Torrance CA 90510 USA
562-595-7831
www.adultchildren.org*

*Cocaine Anonymous WSO (CA)
PO Box 492000
Los Angeles, CA 90049-8000
www.ca.org*

*Clutterers Anonymous World Service Organization
(CLA WSO)
PO Box 91413
Los Angeles, CA 90009-1413
(310) 281-6064
<http://sites.google.com/site/clutterersanonymous>*

*Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA)
CMA General Services
4470 W Sunset Blvd Ste 107 PMB 555
Los Angeles CA 90027-6302
www.crystalmeth.org*

*Co-Dependents Anonymous Fellowship Services
Office (CoDA)
PO Box 33577
Phoenix, AZ 85067-3577
www.coda.org*

*Co-Anon Family Groups World Services
PO Box 12722
Tucson, AZ 85732-2722
520-513-5028
www.co-anon.org*

*COSA - Codependents of Sex Addicts
ISO of COSA
PO Box 79908
Houston TX 77279-9908
(866) 899-COSA (2672)
www.cosa-recovery.org*

*COSLAA - CoSex and Love Addicts Anonymous
Fellowship-Wide Services
1550 NE Loop 410, Ste 118
San Antonio, TX 78209
www.slaafws.org*

*Debtors Anonymous General Service Office (DA)
PO Box 920888
Needham, MA 02492-0009
Toll Free: 800-421-2383 - US Only
781-453-2743*

*Depressed Anonymous
PO Box 17414
Louisville, KY 40217*

*Dual Recovery Anonymous
World Network Central Office
P.O. Box 8107
Prairie Village, Kansas, 6620
www.draonline.org*

*Eating Addictions Anonymous (EAA)
General Service Office
PO Box 8151
Silver Spring, MD 20907-8151
(202) 882-6528
www.eatingaddictionsanonymous.org*

*Emotions Anonymous International (EA)
PO Box 4245, St. Paul MN 55104-0245
Phone: (651) 647-9712
www.emotionsanonymous.org/*

*Emotional Health Anonymous (EHA)
San Gabriel Valley Intergroup
P.O. Box 2081
San Gabriel, CA 91778
626/287-6260 PH*

*Families Anonymous (FA)
P O Box 3475
Culver City, CA 90231-3475
(800) 736-9805
www.FamiliesAnonymous.org*

*Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA)
400 W Cummings Park #1700
Woburn, MA 01801
781 931 6300
www.foodaddicts.org*

*Food Addicts Anonymous (FAA)
529 N W Prima Vista Blvd. #301 A
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
561-967-3871*

*Gamblers Anonymous® (GA)
International Service Office
P.O. Box 17173
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 386-8789
www.gamblersanonymous.org*

*Gam-Anon/Gam-A-Teen, for friends and family
members of problem gamblers
Gam-Anon® International
Service Office, Inc.
PO Box 157
Whitestone, NY 11357
718-352-1671
www.gam-anon.org*

*GreySheeters Anonymous (GSA)
www.graysheet.org*

*Methadone Anonymous (MA)
<http://methadonesupport.org/>*

Marijuana Anonymous World Services (MA)
P.O. Box 7807
Torrance, CA 90504
1-800-766-6779
www.marijuana-anonymous.org

Crystalmeth Anonymous (CMA)
General Services
4470 W Sunset Blvd Ste 107 PMB 555
Los Angeles CA 90027-6302
213.488.4455
www.crystalmeth.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
818.773.9999
www.na.org
NAIL - Neurotics Anonymous
See Emotions Anonymous

Nar-Anon, for friends and family members of addicts
Nar-Anon Family Group headquarters
22527 Crenshaw Blvd Suite 200B
Torrance, CA 90505
310.534.8188 or 800.477.6291
www.nar-anon.org

NicA - Nicotine Anonymous World Services
419 Main Street, PMB# 370
Huntington Beach, CA 92648
Toll Free: (877) 879-6422

Obsessive Compulsive Foundation
PO Box 961029
Boston, MA, 02196
617-973-5801
www.ocfoundation.org

PA - Pills Anonymous
pillanonymous.org

Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. (OA)
PO Box 44020
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87174-4020 USA

On-Line Gamers Anonymous World Services (OLGA)
104 Miller Lane
Harrisburg, PA 17110
(612) 245-1115

Recoveries Anonymous Universal Services
Box 1212
East Northport, NY 11731

Recovering Couples Anonymous WSO Office (RCA)
P.O. Box 11029
Oakland, CA 94611
781-794-1456
www.recovering-couples.org

SA - Smokers Anonymous
See Nicotine Anonymous

SA - Sexaholics Anonymous
International Central Office
PO Box 3565
Brentwood, TN 37024
(615) 370-6062
www.sa.org

ISO of Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA)
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270 USA
1-713-869-4902
www.sexaa.org

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous (SCA)
P.O. Box 1585, Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10011

*SLAA - Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous
Fellowship-Wide Services
1550 NE Loop 410, Ste 118
San Antonio, TX 78209
www.slaafws.org*

*Spender's Anonymous
www.spenders.org*

*Survivors of Incest Anonymous (SIA)
World Service Office
P.O. Box 190
Benson, MD 21018-9998
410-893-3322*

*Workaholics Anonymous (WA)
World Service Organization
Post Office Box 289
Menlo Park, California 94026-0289 U.S.A.
Phone: (510) 273-9253
www.workaholics-anonymous.org*

*Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services
16506 FM 529 Rd - 115 Box 113
Houston, TX 77095
www.ha-fs.org*

*Parents Anonymous (PA)
Parents Anonymous® Inc.
675 West Foothill Blvd., Suite 220
Claremont, CA 91711-3475
(909) 621-6184
www.parentsanonymous.org*

*Pagans In Recovery (PIR)
Non 12-Step program, online forum only*

*Schizophrenics Anonymous (SA)
Non 12-Step program, professional services*

If you are aware of other service offices for 12-Step programs, please forward the information for inclusion in the next edition of this directory.

anonymousreview@gmail.com

AA Book List

Conversion of Bill W By Dick B AA Historian
NEW Highly Recommended www.dickb.com

AA Master Inventory Dick B \$25 to Purchase
Read Free Online 2002 New Editions Available
soon

Turning Point AA Comprehensive History By
Dick B this Book covers all the bases. Oxford
Akron

Not God By Ernest Kurtz - -Highest
Recommendation!! was Th e history of AA by
Ernie K

Bill W by Robert Th omsen c.1975, Published by
Harper & Row

Bill W. (by Francis Hartigan)

AA comes of Age AA World Services

Slaying the Dragon-Th e History of Addiction
Treatment & Recovery (Bill White)

Dr Bob and the Good Old Timers AA World
Services

Language of the Heart AA World Services

My Search for Bill W. (by Mel B.) 2000 Hazelden

New Wine (by Mel B.) 1991 Hazelden

Ebby the Man who sponsored Bill Willson(by Mel
B.) 1998 Hazelden

Bill W. and Mr. Wilson (by Matthew J. Raphael a
pseudonym) Highly recommended!!

Bill W., My First 40 Years, an Autobiography by
the Cofounder of AA-Bill Pittman Hazleden
Publisher

My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson--His Life and the
Creation of Alcoholics Anonymous Susan
Cheever 2006

The Roots of AA (Bill Pittman Hazelden)- was
OOP called AA Way It Began Highly
Recommended

Beware the 1st Drink!! The Washingtonian
Temperance society and AA - 1991 Blumberg
Pittman

Practice Th ese Principles/What is Oxford Group
(Bill Pittman Hazelden)

Twelve Step Sponsorship : How It Works by
Hamilton B. (Hazelden)

The Soul of Sponsorship : The Friendship of Fr. Ed
Dowling -Bill Wilson by Robert Fitzgerald

The Steps We Took: A Shares His Experience,
Strength, and Hope by Joe McQ

The Spirituality of Imperfection by Ernest Kurtz,
Katherine Ketcham

Understanding the 12 Steps By Terrence T Gorski
Fireside/Parkside 1991

A Simple Program by J Big Book rewritten to
Modern Language

Alcoholics Anonymous Cult or Cure Charles Buffe
[click here](#) highly recommended

Courage To Change -Shoemaker (Bill Pittman and Dick B) (Hazelden)

Sister Ignatia: Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous (Mary Darrah Loyola Univ Press)

Mrs. Marty Mann : The First Lady of AA (Sally Brown Hazelden)

Women Pioneers in 12 Step Recovery by Charlotte Hunter

The Natural History of Alcoholism (Geo E Valiant)

Changed Lives: The Story of Alcoholics Anonymous Dennis C. Morreim / 1992

But, for the Grace of God ... ,by Wally P. Bishop of Books

Children of the Healer, the Story of Dr. Bob's Kids, Hazelden

Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous, by Nan Robertson, William Morrow

How It Worked, the Story of Clarence H. Snyder, by Mitchell K. Out of Print Read on Web

Getting Better Inside AA (Nan Robertson 1988) Thomas Congan Books

Physician, Heal Thyself!, by Dr. Earle M., CompCare Publishers

That Amazing Grace, by Dick B., Paradise Research Publications

There's More to Quitting Drinking than Quitting Drinking, by Dr. Paul O., Sabrina Pub.

Anne Smith's Journal (by Dick B)

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